

# TEEVADHARA

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

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## EVANGELIZATION

THE CHURCH AS ESSENTIALLY MISSIONARY

*Xavier Koodapuzha*

THE BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF EVANGELIZATION

*Mathew Vellanickal*

VATICAN II AND THE POST-CONCILIAR THEOLOGY OF  
EVANGELIZATION

*J. Masson*

SOME THOUGHTS ON EVANGELIZATION AND DIALOGUE

*Tissa Balasuriya*

BULLETIN: EVANGELIZATION AND THE CATHOLIC  
CHURCH IN KERALA

*George Puthumana*

BOOK REVIEWS

## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Editorial	291
The Church as Essentially Missionary	293
<i>Xavier Koodapuzha</i>	
The Biblical Theology of Evangelization	304
<i>Mathew Vellanickal</i>	
Vatican II and the Post-Conciliar Theology of Evangelization	319
<i>J. Masson</i>	
Some Thoughts on Evangelization and Dialogue	330
<i>Tissa Balasuriya</i>	
Bulletin: Evangelization and the Catholic Church in Kerala	350
<i>George Puthumana</i>	
Book Review	368
<i>The Priestly Ministry</i>	

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# JEEVADHARA

— A Journal of Christian Interpretation —

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# The People of God

EVANGELIZATION

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# Editorial

One cannot fail to notice the new insights in the understanding of the nature of the Church and their consequent influence on the Theology of Evangelization. The Church is missionary by her very nature. Her missionary nature comes from her Trinitarian mission.

Evangelization is not a mere additional obligation of the Church. It is the natural unfolding of her own inner life which is divine. She has to bear witness to what she is by her divine mission. The Conciliar documents *Lumen Gentium*, *Ad Gentes* and *Gaudium et Spes* have opened new horizons for ecclesiological and missiological studies. The International Theological Conference on Evangelization held at Nagpur in October 1971 too has made a substantial contribution for a richer understanding of the missionary nature of the Church.

All the articles of this issue are on the different aspects of the Theology of Evangelization. Here we intend to analyse its basis, nature and prospects at national and international levels. The first article by Xavier Koodapuzha deals with the missionary nature of the Church which is Trinitarian in its origin. Evangelization belongs to the very nature of the Church. The Christian existence is a life of communion and therefore open to sharing with others. If it is closed within itself it ceases to be a Christian life. This sharing is manifested through service. The Second article by Mathew Vellanickal traces the Biblical basis of the Theology of Evangelization. Beginning with the Old Testament the analysis proceeds systematically to the ministry and person of Christ and points out that Evangelization is a "progressive realization of the very being of the Church which effectively makes present in the world the Trinitarian life communicated by

Christ through his Spirit.” In the next article J. Masson throws light on the recent developments in the Theology of Evangelization. He briefly exposes the background of the missionary problem before, during and after the Second Vatican Council and shows how far it was answered by the Council and what areas are still left open for research and discussion. The study of Tissa Balasuriya is about the problem of Evangelization in the Asian context. The various forces at work are exposed and the relevance of the gospel in moulding the future of the Asiatic countries is pointed out. It is followed by George Puthumana’s study, in which he focusses the problem in the Indian context. The Church in India is as old as Christianity itself, and it has been contributing an important share in the evangelization of India. The ancient Eastern Christianity in India was “Christian in religion, Oriental in worship and Hindu in culture.” This indigenous Church met with strong opposition after the arrival of the colonial powers from the West. The Western powers too have played an important part in the evangelization of India though it was often mixed with colonial interests! This situation poses problems not only in the field of evangelization but also in the field of ecumenism.

A genuine understanding of the message of the gospel is inevitable in order to present it effectively in our own times. The time of imposition is gone for ever and now the values of the gospel alone can survive. We are able to understand and appreciate them only through our own Christian experience. This experience necessarily enables us to share them with others. It is a spontaneous unfolding of the richness we realize in our own lives and of our generosity in sharing it with our brethren.

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# The Church as Essentially Missionary

The Christian vocation is essentially a missionary vocation. Vatican II also reminds us of the same truth mainly in the documents *Ad Gentes* and *Lumen Gentium*. In the very beginning of these documents the missionary nature of the Church is made clear. *Ad Gentes* makes the following statement: "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, for it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she takes her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father"<sup>(1)</sup>. The same concept is theologically developed in the next three articles.

The theological principle of the missionary nature of the Church flows from the Trinitarian mission. The risen Lord commissioned the Apostles saying, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you"<sup>(2)</sup>. Again in Mt 28: 18-20 we see the same missionary command to preach the gospel to all and to baptize them in the name of the Trinity. Thus the infant Church represented by a small group of disciples is officially commissioned to continue the divine mission of the Son. This Trinitarian dimension is profoundly significant in the missionary role of the Church.

The Trinitarian procession is the revelation to us of God's innermost being which is love. God who through the mystery of incarnation has manifested himself in human flesh has become the animating principle of the Church through the descent of the Holy Spirit. God the Father wants mankind to be united in His Son through the Spirit.

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(1) *Ad Gentes*, 2; Cfr. also *LG* 2 - 4 and 17.

(2) *Jn.* 20: 21.

## I. The Trinitarian Mission in the Church

The Blessed Trinity is the very source of the mission of the Church. The Church as a community of those who are united in faith, hope and charity, is called upon to be at the service of this life-sharing process of the Trinity. The life which the Church seeks to share is divine and it necessarily tends to an ever growing and expanding expression of itself. This outgoing dynamic process is a driving force which permeates every aspect of human existence. This force stands above transition, and its influence and relevance are permanent because the values it proclaims are eternal in their source and destiny.

The Church united in charity is the most authentic expression of its Trinitarian mission. The Father sent His Son because of love. The unity in love is made the distinguishing mark of the Christian community. "By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another" (3). Being animated by the Trinitarian love the Church is to proclaim the gospel of unity in charity to the whole human race. She is to announce the greatest event in human history, the mystery of Jesus Christ who came to restore the unity in charity. *Lumen Gentium* sums up the ecclesial mission as follows: "In this way the Church simultaneously prays and labours in order that the entire world may become the People of God, the Body of the Lord, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and that in Christ, the Head of all, there may be rendered to the Creator and Father of the Universe all honour and glory" (4). The decree on the Missions too, clearly exposes the Trinitarian character of unity in love in the mission of the Church. "But it has not pleased God to call men to share His life merely as individuals without any mutual bonds. Rather, He wills to mould them into a people in which His sons, once scattered abroad, can be gathered together" (5). It is also profoundly significant that the Decree on Ecumenism while enunciating the Catholic principles of Ecumenism (art 2.) begins with the Trinitarian one.

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(3) Jn. 13: 35.

(4) L. G. 17.

(5) *Ad Gentes*, 2.

## II. The Mission of the Son

"Sicut *misit* me Pater...." Christ was constantly aware of the truth that he was sent by his Father. "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who *sent* me"<sup>(6)</sup>. "I go to him who *sent* me" (7). Paul also says that God "*sent* his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh"<sup>(8)</sup>. Through his incarnation, ministry, passion, death and resurrection Christ fulfilled *his mission* and transmitted it to his Church promising the assistance of his Spirit. In Lk. 4: 18-21 we are told about the fulfilment of the messianic signs. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has *sent* me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Christ limited his sphere of preaching to the sons of Israel. But on seeing the deep faith of the Canaanite woman he performed a messianic sign<sup>(9)</sup>.

Moreover we read in the prologue of St John that "All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made"<sup>(10)</sup>. It is through him, with him and in him that all honour and glory in union with the Holy Spirit are rendered to the Father. The whole of creation participates in the very being of the Word. As the Word is the image of the Father we are made images of the Word, through creation<sup>(11)</sup>. But sin separated mankind from the Word, and the Word came in search of the lost and reassumed us through the incarnation. It is a restoration and reintegration. After accomplishing this the Son ascended to the Father. Christ stands as the centre of the whole of creation. We are consecrated and remoulded by him. Paul summarises the whole mystery as follows: "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all

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(6) Jn. 6: 39.

(7) Jn. 7: 33.

(8) Rom. 8: 3; cfr. Gal. 4: 4.

(9) Mk. 5: 25-34; Lk 8: 43-48.

(10) Jn. 1: 2.

(11) J. Danielou, *God's Life in Us*, Denville, 1969, cfr. pp. 76-77.



things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross"<sup>(12)</sup>. Christ offers the whole of creation to the Father after establishing the divine sovereignty over all things.

### III. The Role of the Holy Spirit

"As the Father sent me . . . . Receive the Holy Spirit..."<sup>(13)</sup> There is an intimate relation between the sending of the disciples and their consecration. The giving of the Holy Spirit follows Christ's entrusting of his mission to his disciples. The Spirit consecrates the disciples. Just as in the first creation God breathed into man a living Spirit, now Jesus breathes his own Spirit into his disciples.

In the Pentecostal address Peter speaks of the Spirit (Christ). "Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear"<sup>(14)</sup>. The humanity of Christ was penetrated by the Holy Spirit in order that thereby our humanity might also be permeated by the same Spirit and made a divine abode<sup>(15)</sup>. As a result of this penetration we are made sharers of God's life<sup>(16)</sup>. Being made the sons of the Father, brothers of Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit we are led to the sphere of the Trinity<sup>(17)</sup>, the divine milieu where the Spirit is continually at work uniting us to one another in Christ. The Church which is the result of this union is therefore, a communion in the Spirit, an organic unity with a rich variety of functions<sup>(18)</sup>.

Hence we can appreciate the need for a pneumatological emphasis in the doctrine of the Church which was pointed out

(12) Col. 1: 19-20; cfr. also I Cor. 15: 27-28.

(13) Jn. 20: 21-22.

(14) Acts 2: 33.

(15) I Cor. 3: 16.

(16) II Pet. 1: 4; Phil. 1: 7; Heb. 6: 4.

(17) J. Danielou, *op. cit.* p. 43.

(18) I Cor. 12: 1-4.



in the Conciliar discussions of Vatican II<sup>(19)</sup>. Baptism is the effective sign of our rebirth in the Spirit<sup>(20)</sup>. It is the same indwelling Spirit that urges us to grow into the fullness of Christ and share him with others in living communion. The Holy Spirit therefore is at once the soul of the Christian community and the source of its inner effusiveness and communion. The great Pentecostal event was the solemn manifestation of the life-giving and dynamic presence of Christ's Spirit in the Church, and the missionary impact of his presence is well recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles* which as it has been pointed out, can rightly be called the gospel of the Holy Spirit.

#### IV. The Mission of the Church

The Church then is missionary by her very nature. This mission begins from the Father, the infinite first principle<sup>(21)</sup> and it returns to him. It is expressed in the Son and sustained by the Spirit<sup>(22)</sup>. As the Church is the assembly of those united in the Spirit one cannot conceive of the Church without understanding her missionary nature. Her mission is her very inner exigency. This missionary dimension, as we have seen, is of Trinitarian origin. This tension and urge to grow and diffuse herself flows from the profound Trinitarian source. Thus we fully appreciate the statement that "the Church is essentially the life of the Blessed Trinity given to mankind and destined to embrace the

(19) Some of the Council Fathers pointed out that Ecclesiology was reduced to hierarchology. cfr. the Speech of Card. Suenens, 'Charismatic Dimension in the Church', in *Council Speeches of Vatican II*, ed. by Küng, Congar and O'Hanlon, Glen Rock, 1964, pp. 29-34.

(20) Jn. 3: 5.

(21) M. J. Guillou O. P., 'Mission as an Ecclesiological Theme', *Concilium* Vol. 3, No. 2 (1966) pp. 42-67. The Pauline notion of the mystery shows the internal link between the mission and the Trinitarian mystery. Cfr. pp. 56-57. The following is the formula dear to the Greek Fathers "From the Father, by the Son, in the Holy Spirit - in the Holy Spirit, by the Son, back to the Father."

(22) Ibid. p. 56: cfr. also Yves Congar, *Esquisses du mystere de l'Eglise*, Paris, 1966, p. 99.

entire human race"(23). *Lumen Gentium* calls the Church a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and all mankind(24). It is a sign and instrument of the grace which unites men supernaturally with God and with one another. The *raison d'être* of the Church is to bring to all men the light of Christ. Her service is extended to every human being and is open to all nations and to all time(25). She has to gather all men together into the People of God in the ecclesial sanctuary. She has to do it showing profound respect for all genuine values.

While carrying out this mission the Church should realize that the other religious traditions are a preparation for the gospel. She is not to claim an absolute monopoly of all goodness, salvation, moral virtues etc. The world created by God is the very manifestation of his own goodness and love and Christ is its fulfilment and completion. Therefore the Church should have a genuinely positive attitude to the world. A Christian is well aware of his mission in the world. He is only happy to acknowledge and accept the genuine human values which are enshrined in other religions and in human culture at large(26). For, he knows that the whole cosmos is from God and goes back to him. He cannot imagine a God who retires from the world after creating

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(23) Kevin McNamara, 'Go and Make Disciples', in *The Church is Mission*, London, 1969, p. 25.

(24) L. G. I.

(25) Cfr. R. P. Olivier O. P., 'L'Eglise est Mission', in *Mission et Liberte Religieuse*, Louvain, 1967, pp. 30-31. The author analyses the universal and permanent character of the mission of the Church.

(26) R. Panikkar, 'Relation of Christians to their non-Christian Surroundings' *Ind. Ecl. Studies* 4, (1965) p. 321 "The Christian relation with the world is thus a relation with God's world and in consequence a relation guided by the very supernatural act of faith, hope and love in, to and for the world as it ultimately is: God's creation, not only in the sense of a possession of God but also in the sense of God's own (here world will not do) "being" 'creation' 'body' etc., Any deep relationship with the world cannot exclude its Maker, the Logos through which every thing has come to be."

it. For him God is the Father and Lord of an on-going creation. The mission of the Church therefore is not to impose something upon the world from without but to hasten the germination of the divine seed buried within creation and to bring it to fulfilment in Christ.

## V. The Church, Signum Christi

The missionary activity of the Church consists essentially in uniting people in Christ who is the way, life and truth<sup>(27)</sup>. No one goes to the Father except through Him. He solemnly commissioned his disciples to be his authentic witnesses in the whole world. "You shall receive the power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the world"<sup>(28)</sup>. A witness is a sign of the truth in *verbo et opere*. He has to be fully at the service of the truth in humility and truthfulness.

As a sign leads others to a knowledge of the object it signifies, the Church should lead men to a knowledge of the Person of Christ for whom it exists. The sign as sign has no value if it is severed from the reality it signifies. The missionary role of the Church is to lead mankind to their full realization in Christ. As Christ was always the effective sign of the will of his Father, the Church should always be the effective sign of Christ. As Henri de Lubac has pointed out: "If she is not the sacrament, the effective sign of Christ, then she is nothing. The Church's unique mission is that of making Christ present to men. She is to announce him, show him, and give him to all; the rest I repeat, is superabundance"<sup>(29)</sup>.

A constant awareness of her sacramentality is essential so that the Church may fulfil her missionary role. A lack of this awareness will obscure the true image of the Church. There is a constant temptation to stop with the sign and embellish it for its own sake. The consequence would be really disastrous. The Church may take on the shape of a purely worldly organi-

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(27) Jn. 14: 6.

(28) Acts 1: 8.

(29) Henri de Lubac, *The Splendour of the Church*, trans. by Michael Mason, Glen Rock, 1955, p. 131.

sation which exists for itself. We may be preaching the Church instead of Christ, and may end up by weaving a web in which she herself will be trapped.

It is Christ who is to be preached and his message which is to be proclaimed. It is his Kingdom which is to be announced and his will that must be fulfilled. The Church in her visible aspect should have a vivid awareness that she is a sign and has no other role than to lead mankind to Christ.

## VI. Church's Mission is Essentially Service

When the disciples showed their arrogant concern for power, precedence and prestige Jesus told them. "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"<sup>(30)</sup>. The missionary activity of the Church cannot assume a different role from the one given by Christ. Christ who went about doing good is the true image of the Church. While explaining the missionary nature of the Church the Decree on the Missions lays particular emphasis on service in the spirit of poverty<sup>(31)</sup>. Jesus humbled himself and assisted others in humility. The suffering millions around us demand this attitude of humble service from the Church.

The mission of the Church will always be relevant if she remains a genuine witness of Christ in humility and truthfulness. Her mission is never to command power and bring others under her sway but to be at the service of every community, and every group or individual, with profound respect for their freedom<sup>(32)</sup>.

But if we analyse the annals of history and observe the structural evolution of the Church, it is not difficult to find certain strong influences which obscured the image of humility,

(30) Mt. 20: 28.

(31) *Ad Gentes*, 3; cfr. also 2 Cor. 8: 9; Hebr. 4: 15; 9: 18.

(32) Hans Küng, 'The World Religions and God's Plan of Salvation', *Ind. Eccl. Studies*, 4 (1965) p. 218.



service and poverty of the Church<sup>(33)</sup>. One notices that religion became at times a mask in the sheer struggle for power and prestige. Wherever this has happened there has been a mission but with service replaced by domination. In the place of claims for power, privileges and prerogatives the spirit of Christian humility and service should be established. The Church should not be reduced to the level of a mere lifeless organization which retains vestiges of feudalism. The missionary role of the Church should never be allowed to be misunderstood<sup>(34)</sup>.

The document *Gaudium et Spes* gives the right orientation to missionary activities by underlining the deep concern the Church should have for the people among whom it exists. "The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ"<sup>(35)</sup>. The Church has to assist mankind and make it aware of human dignity and to foster the brotherhood of all men<sup>(36)</sup>. This demands a radical conversion in certain aspects of the activities of the Church today. The words of Van den Heuvel are indeed thought-provoking. "The Church is there for the world, for the welfare of the world. I cannot accept any other starting point for thinking about the Church. The Church proves her identity by existing for others, and it is only there that she gets her authority. If she thinks of keeping her own life, she has lost it already. We are not more than our master

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(33) Yves Congar analyses the development of administrative structures of the Church and the sources of the political influences in the canonical discipline. *Power and Poverty in the Church*, London, 1965. Jan McNeil, 'Attitudes to Authority in the Medieval Centuries', in *Problems of Authority*, ed. by J. M. Todd, London, 1964. pp. 157-168.

(34) Msgr. J. Vodopivec, 'Unity in Diversity: the Problem of Reunion in Missionary Perspective', *Euntes Docete* (1960) 2-3, pp. 499-512. The author makes a theological analysis of the problem of adaptation in the light of historical sources.

(35) *Gaudium et Spes*, 1.

(36) *Ibidem* 3.

and we therefore take up the *morphe tou doulou*, the form of service"<sup>37</sup>.

The Church will make herself relevant to society by showing her right image as a community of service and a sacrament of unity. This attitude will open up new horizons of service. In a world of rapid and radical social changes both structural and functional, the serving mission of the Church must assume ever new forms and methods if she is to remain a permeating force. *Ad Gentes* invites every Christian to take part in the struggle against hunger, ignorance and disease and to collaborate with other national and international agencies in a spirit of charity and faithful service<sup>(38)</sup>. This reorientation in the spirit of solidarity and service will help the Church to show her real missionary nature.

## Conclusion

The Church is on her march to the Lord of creation. The whole of creation has to be renewed, united and offered to the Father through Christ. This is the mission the Church has received from him.

She stands before God, the common Father of all, as the representative of mankind. She prepares the people by her witness to the gospel. Her role is one of service, reconciliation and elevation. She should not create the impression that she is a group of the privileged opposed to those who are in other religions. She is the sign of those who follow the gospel of Jesus, and should announce this good news to all, extending the invitation to renewal in Christ, which Jesus inaugurated and the Church continues with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The restoration of the unity of humanity in Christ is being achieved through the deep penetration of the message of the gospel. This unity in organic diversity has a Christological foundation. It is a sharing of the fulness of the true life "I came

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(37) A. H. van den Heuvel, *The Humiliation of the Church*, Philadelphia, 1966, p. 54.

(38) *Ad Gentes*, 12.

that they may have life and have it abundantly”(39). This life-giving process continues through the Church. St Paul explains it: “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness of life in him”(40). St John also calls it a sharing of the fullness: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us... And from his fullness have we all received”(41). God invites us to share this fullness of life offered to us in Christ through his Church: “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you!”

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(39) Jn. 10: 10.

(40) Col. 2: 9-10.

(41) Jn. 1: 14-16.

# The Biblical Theology of Evangelization\*

The search for the right biblical and theological basis of Evangelization has gained momentum since the beginning of the modern missionary movement. The clarification of the term is all important for the Church's existence and service; and this cannot be done without objectively examining and evaluating the biblical data, especially that of the New Testament. Hence this attempt to understand the biblical pronouncements on Evangelization.

## I

### EVANGELIZATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Hebrew word for 'Evangelization' is *bsr* and has the general meaning of 'proclaiming the good news'<sup>1</sup>. Sometimes the attribute *thoba* (good) is added to it. But it only strengthens the meaning it already has. The word gets a religious sense in I Sam 31 : 9; Ps 40 : 10 and 68 : 11, where it refers to the isolated acts of Yahweh. It is in Deutero-Isaiah that it gets a real Messianic meaning, referring to the great victory or the kingly rule of Yahweh and to the dawn of a new age with a universal and eschatological character.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of Evangelization in the OT cannot be rightly understood apart from the background of the Israelite concept of God and of the promise, given in the OT, of the salvation of the nations in the last days.

A fundamental element of the concept of Evangelization in the OT is the universalist understanding of God. The superiority of Yahweh to all other deities was consistently asserted.<sup>3</sup>

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\* This paper was read at the Nagpur International Theological Conference.

1. Cf. I Kg 1 : 42.

2. Cf. Is 40 : 9; 52 : 7; 60 : 6; 61 : 1

3. Cf. Dt 32 : 8 f; Is 24 : 21; Jer 46 : 25



All the nations come from Yahweh and are used by Him as instruments.<sup>4</sup>

Another important idea is that salvation through Yahweh is offered to the other nations too. At the very beginning of the history of Israel, divine blessing is promised to all nations mediated through Abraham and the chosen people<sup>5</sup>. From the time of Isaiah, this promise is introduced in connection with the eschatological action of Yahweh<sup>6</sup>.

A third point is that Israel bears witness to God before the nations by reason of God's salvation given to her, and by reason of her existence. Since the saving activity takes place in the midst of the nations and Israel bears witness to it with thanks and praise, she becomes the 'light of the nations', and so the nations come and acknowledge Yahweh as the one God<sup>7</sup>. Besides, the life of Israel had to reflect the life of God<sup>8</sup>, and thus be a sign of God in her very existence<sup>9</sup>.

Finally, we find also the element of 'sending' or 'commissioning' by God in Israel. Certain men are sent by God to Israel, beginning from Moses right through the prophets. The expression 'I send you' is the core of the prophetic call.<sup>10</sup> The consciousness of this personal mission received from God is an essential character of the prophetic mission, and is put forward against the false prophets<sup>11</sup>. This sending has a missionary character in so far as it is related to the universal salvific plan of God, though it directly refers to the people of God. Since

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4. Cf. for example Ps. 110. Cf. Albrecht Alt, "Die Deutung der Weltgeschichte im Alten Testament," *ZTHK* 56 (1959), 129 - 137

5. Cf. Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 26:4

6. Cf. Is 2:1 - 4; 18:7; 45:18 - 25; 60:1 - 22

7. Cf. Is 42:6; 49:6. Cf. H. W. Wolfe, "Israel und die Völker bei Deuterocesaja", *EMZ* 8 (1951), 1 - 14

8. Cf. Lev. 11:44 - 45, "Be ye holy as I am holy".

9. Cf. F. Kamphaus, "Mission", *Encyclopédie de la Foi*, Paris, 1966, 85 - 86

10. Cf. Exod 3:10; Jer 1:7; Ez 2:3f; 3:4f

11. Cf. Jer 14:14f; 23:21, 32; 28:15; 29:9

the very existence of Israel is a missionary existence in view of the salvation of all the nations, the sending of the Israelitic prophets also becomes missionary.

So, although there is no explicit divine commission to evangelize the nations, or any conscious outgoing to the Gentiles as in the New Testament, there are decisive basic features of Evangelization in the Old Testament which find their full development in the New.

## II

### EVANGELIZATION IN THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS

The New Testament's view of Evangelization is deeply rooted in Jesus' message that 'the Kingdom of God is upon you'. In Mk 1: 14-15 we have a programmatic summary of Jesus' preaching in specifically Christian terms: "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel." These words clearly show the eschatological nature of Jesus' presence and ministry. In Jesus we have an eschatology that is in the process of realization<sup>12</sup>.

#### 1. Jesus' Mission - Universal

There is no doubt that Jesus directed his work in the first place to Israel, but to Israel understood as God's people as a whole. He did not subscribe to the idea of gathering the holy remnant, which was wide-spread in the Judaism of that time<sup>13</sup>. For that reason he appointed the twelve as representatives of God's newly established covenant with the New Israel. The conventional boundaries within Israel, as they had been drawn by the fanatic Jews, no longer existed for Jesus. He did not refuse help and fellowship to the sick who were segregated on cultic and ritual grounds, or to prostitutes and sinners who were

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12. Cf. J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, Rev. ed. 1963, 230

13. Cf. J. Jeremias, "Der Gedanke des 'Heiligen Restes' im Spätjudentum und in der Verkündigung Jesu", *ZNW* 42 (1949), 184 - 194

ostracized on moral grounds, or to tax-collectors who were excluded on religious and nationalistic grounds<sup>14</sup>.

Jesus' activity was never limited to the Jewish boundaries. We see Gentiles turning to him for help and Jesus responding to their trustful entreaty. See for example the narratives of the Centurion at Caparnaum<sup>15</sup> and of the Syro-Phoenician woman<sup>16</sup>. If, according to the interpretation of Jesus himself, his miracles are to be understood in the light of the present coming of salvation<sup>17</sup>, we have to see in them the dawning of the day of salvation for the Gentiles too. In working for the salvation of all Israel, Jesus works for the salvation of the whole world<sup>18</sup>.

The words referring to many coming from east and west and sitting at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of heaven<sup>19</sup>, the antithetic reference to the Jewish towns rejecting and the Gentile towns accepting Jesus' message<sup>20</sup>, and the parable of the great banquet<sup>21</sup>, all show that Jesus understood his work in Israel from a universalist point of view.

Jesus' message and works in Israel became a witness among the Gentiles. As the eschatological event already began to be realized in Christ, salvation came within the direct reach of the Gentiles.

## 2. The Kingdom of God and the Person of Christ.

The Evangelization in the life of Jesus is centred on the message 'The Kingdom of God is upon you'. It is true that the term 'Kingdom of God' in itself indicates the eschatological

14. Cf. Lk 10:30 - 37; 17:11 - 19, Jn 4:1f

15. Mt 8:5 - 10, 13; Lk 7:1 - 9; Jn 4:46 - 53

16. Mk 7:24 - 30 par.

17. Cf. Lk 11:20 par. "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you".

18. Cf. F. Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament*, London 1965, 33

19. Cf. Mt 8:11f and parallels

20. Mt 10:14 - 15; Mt 11:21f and parallels

21. Lk 14:16 - 24

salvation realized by God exercising his sovereignty<sup>22</sup>. But it is intimately connected with the person of Christ, almost bordering on an identification. The 'seeing of the Kingdom' in Mk 9 : 1 and Lk 9 : 27 is changed by Mt 16 : 28 into 'seeing the Son of Man coming with his Kingdom'. Mt 19 : 29 with Mk 10 : 29 and Lk 18 : 29 put 'Christ' and the 'Kingdom of God' as parallels: "And everyone who has left... for my name's sake (Mt 19 : 29), for my sake (Mk 10 : 29), for the sake of the Kingdom of God (Lk 18 : 29)". The same parallelism is found also in Mk 11 : 10 and Lk 19 : 38. It is in the person of Christ that the Kingdom of God is realized, initially during his public ministry (of which his miracles are signs), and decisively in his saving work as it moves towards its consummation.

This identification of the Kingdom of God with the person of Christ is found more explicitly in the Gospel of John. In John the word 'Kingdom' occurs in 2 places, namely, in 18 : 36 - 37 and 3 : 3 - 5. In Jn 18 : 36 - 37 the 'Kingdom' and the 'Kingship of Christ'<sup>23</sup> are parallel to his 'coming into the world to witness to the truth', and he affirms the necessity of 'being of the truth' to hear his voice. In other words, he shows that the realization of his kingship takes place in the measure in which one lives a life of faith in him<sup>24</sup>.

Also Jn 3 : 3, 5 is to be given a Christological interpretation, namely, 'to see and enter the Kingdom of God' means to enter a life of faith in Christ, as interpreted by many of the Fathers of the Church such as Chrysostom<sup>25</sup> and Cyril of Alexandria<sup>26</sup>. This life of faith in Christ will result in a life of communion with him which is eternal life<sup>27</sup>.

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22. Cf. K. L. Schmidt, "Basileia", *TDNT* I, 581 - 592

23. Though the terminology is different, 'Kingdom of God' and 'Kingdom of Christ' are identical. Cf. K. L. Schmidt, art. cit., 581 - 582

24. Cf. C. Traets, *Voir Jésus et le Père en Lui selon l'Evangile de Saint Jean*, Rome 1967, 130, note 27.

25. Cf. PG 59, 146

26. Cf. PG 73, 241

27. Cf. Jn 3 : 36



It is interesting to note the parallelism between the 'Kingdom of God' and 'life' in the Synoptics<sup>28</sup>. The historical Christ was a sort of existential definition of God's life, revealing God in himself, which was actually a life of love, reaching its culmination in his death on the cross. So in Christ the life of God which is love<sup>29</sup>, is made present in the world and for the world<sup>30</sup>. Hence Christ's very existence was essentially of a missionary character.

### 3. Christ as the 'One who is Sent'

The word *apostolos* is used only once for Christ in the NT, namely in Heb. 3:1, but the idea is present throughout. Jesus presents himself as the One who is sent by God as announced by Isaiah<sup>31</sup>. In welcoming or rejecting Christ, one welcomes or rejects him who sent him<sup>32</sup>, namely God the Father, who has handed over all things to him (Mt 11: 27). The parable of the vinedressers underlines the continuity of his mission with that of the prophets, but at the same time the unique character of his mission<sup>33</sup>.

The consciousness of a divine mission was fundamental to his life and activity<sup>34</sup>. Statements regarding his relation to the Father are largely governed by the verb *apostellein*. This is especially true of the Gospel of John<sup>35</sup>. All the aspects of his redemptive work from the incarnation to the death on the cross, were related to the mission received from the Father. He speaks of his whole life as a life of missionary commitment when he

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28. Cf. Mk 9:43 - 47; cf. also Mk 10:17, 23 and parallels Mt 19:16 - 23 and Lk 18:18 - 24 where both 'Life' and 'Kingdom of God' are used interchangeably

29. Cf. I Jn 4:8, 16

30. Cf. Jn 10:10 "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly"

31. Lk 4:17 - 21; Is 61:1 f

32. Lk 9:48; 10:16

33. Mk 12:2 - 8

34. Mk 1:38; Mt 5:17; Lk 12:49, etc.

35. In John it is given about 40 times. Cf. for example, Jn 3:17; 10:36; 17:18

uses the two metaphors of 'food' and 'harvest'<sup>36</sup> in a missionary context. He refers to the Samaritans who came to believe in him (Jn 4:39-41) as fields already white for harvest (v. 35b). The metaphor of food shows that he cannot live except by being a missionary: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and accomplish his work" (v. 34). The metaphor of harvest is an OT one referring to the eschatological time of salvation<sup>37</sup>. In Mt 9:37f the same metaphor is used of missionary activity and is followed by the mission discourse. So the mission work is the very work in which the Father and the Son, the sower and the reaper, work and rejoice together. Jesus lives entirely from his union with the Father expressed in the unity of will and fellowship in work.

#### 4 Jesus' missionary life – expression of his inner life

The very missionary life of Jesus is the necessary expression of his inner Trinitarian life. Christ, being the Son, reveals the Father through his filial life, a life of love and fellowship with the Father, expressed in his earthly life of love. He invites men to share in that life through faith in him<sup>38</sup>. This life is essentially a life of love and fellowship, and hence can be realized only in a communitarian life. Hence the grouping of the disciples in a community of love and fellowship, sharing the same divine life. The whole fare-well discourse, stressing the necessity of unity and love among his disciples is just an explication of this missionary task of Jesus. In the measure in which this sharing of the same divine life is realized, the Kingdom of God will be established, and the mission of Jesus will be realized. So Jesus' life, being a sacrament of God, who is love, is essentially missionary. Hence, Christ as *euaggelion* and Christ as *apostolos* though expressing two different aspects, merge into a dynamic unity in the concrete person of Christ.

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36. Jn 4:34 – 38

37. Cf. Joel 4:13; Is 27:12

38. Cf. Jn 20:31, where concluding the Gospel he says, "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is Christ, the Son of God, and believing, you may have life in his name."

### III

## EVANGELIZATION IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

### 1. The disciples and Evangelization

Jesus asked his disciples to continue his mission, already during his lifetime. This is clear from his commissioning words in Mk 6:7-11, Lk 9:1-5, Lk 10:1-12 and Mt 9:37-10:16, however much the wording may have been influenced by their later missionary experience. Even as early as the story of the call in Mk 1:16f, the 'follow me' is supplemented by the graphic idea of 'fishers of men'. This shows that the disciples were put at once into Jesus' own service of Evangelization. According to the various texts concerned, he does not merely send his disciples out to spread the news of what they have seen and heard but makes them take part in the same full authority by which he himself works<sup>39</sup>. They are not merely his messengers; they are his fellow-workers. This sending of them had the same eschatological and universal dimension as that of Christ, because it is the same work that is continued by them<sup>40</sup>. A general limitation as expressed in Mt 10:5b, 6, 23 can scarcely go back to Jesus and may reflect the later sectarian tendency of the Jewish Christianity of Palestine<sup>41</sup>.

### 2. The twofold basis of the Missionary Commitment

But the commission and sending during the earthly life of Jesus do not seem to have been decisive, to have had lasting and permanent effect. At the death of Jesus, the disciples were disheartened even to the extent of denying the Lord<sup>42</sup>. It is the act of the risen Lord that makes this scattered group a community, the new Israel, full of hope and ready for action. It was after the resurrection that Jesus made the disciples a real missionary

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39. Cf. Mt 10:1, 7-8

40. Compare Mt 9:35f referring to Jesus 'missionary activity' with Mt 10:7-8 referring to the disciples' activity

41. Cf. F. Hahn, *op. cit.*, 54-59

42. Cf. Jn 18:15-18, 25-27

community, commissioning them to continue his work<sup>43</sup>. So the basis of the missionary commitment seems to be: a personal encounter with the risen Lord and a commissioning by him with authority and power. The missionary life of St Paul is a typical example. It was essentially determined by his encounter with the risen Christ (on the Damascus road).

The Spirit is indispensable for the missionary task because it is in the Spirit that one encounters the risen Christ, and receives the assurance of the presence and power of Jesus. The giving of the Spirit and the commissioning take place simultaneously (Jn 20:21f). The same is indicated also in Mt 28:18-20. The disciples are commissioned with the missionary task and are assured of the presence of Jesus, and the eschatological fulfilment of the Church is foreshadowed: "I am with you always, to the close of the age." The resurrection is the beginning of a new existence, in which the life of Christ becomes the enduring life of that group which continues his mission, namely the Church.

### 3. The missionary commitment — a necessity

Receiving the Spirit of the risen Christ one is initiated into the Trinitarian life, which is essentially a communitarian life of fellowship and love. This new Christian existence, therefore, is an existence with a built-in opening towards outside, namely, a necessity of sharing it with others. Jesus' words of commission simply make this essential missionary character of Christian existence explicit. Hence we understand St Paul when he says that for him missionary preaching is both a *necessity*<sup>44</sup> and a *command*<sup>45</sup>. If on the one hand the sharing (opening towards others) is necessary for experiencing the Christian existence, on the other, the experience of Christian existence necessitates its sharing.

This new existence of Christ in the group sharing his life in the Spirit laid the foundation of the Church. It was a decisive

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43. Cf. the commissioning words in Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16; Lk 24:46-49; Jn 20:21-22

44. Cf. I Cor 9:16 "... for necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel".

45. Cf. Tit 1:3 "... the preaching with which I have been entrusted by Command of God, our Saviour".



stage in the establishment of the Kingdom or in the realization of the eschatological salvation.

#### 4. Peter and Paul in the field of Evangelization

The experience of Christian existence is the beginning of the missionary work of the first Christian community of which Peter and Paul were pioneers. Peter recognized, in his preaching, the priority of Israel, but also accepted the non-Jews on the ground of their faith. This is clear from the ending of the Pentecost story and also from the Cornelius narrative. Peter was representative of the earliest Church. The earliest Church, therefore, maintained the claim to the whole of God's people, but at the same time observed and followed the line of Jesus' own acceptance of individual Gentiles and his words in Mt 8:11f. Peter did not become a missionary to the Gentiles in the true sense. But it is clear from his stand at the Jerusalem Council that he never approved unreservedly the one-sided attitude of the strict Jewish Christians and on that account Paul speaks quite appreciatively of him even after the Antioch affair.

It is beyond question that Paul built his missionary task on the presuppositions of the early Church. But from the moment of his conversion he knew that he was called to a mission among the Gentiles<sup>46</sup>. But this again did not exclude the Jews. Note his words "To Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win the Jews."<sup>47</sup> For Paul also, as in previous missionary work, "To the Jews first" is an incontestable principle<sup>48</sup>. But it is so in the sense of the special election of Israel by God as a decision in view of Christ. The final fulfilment of the history of God's choice is not reached. The real Israel of God is being gathered (Gal. 6:16).

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46. Cf. Gal. 1:15f. In Rom 1:5 he speaks of his "special grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith.... among all the nations

47. Cf. I Cor 9:20

48. This does not refer to the temporal sequence of his missionary work but the permanent position of precedence due to special election. Cf. F. Hahn, *op. cit.*, 105, note 2

## 5. From 'Proclamation' to 'Witnessing'

The words of the missionary commissioning in the Synoptic Gospels, namely, Mk 16:15f; Mt 28:18-20; Lk 24:47f, as a reflection of the experience of the Early Church show a development in the very concept of Evangelization<sup>49</sup>. Among the three Synoptic texts, Mk 16:15-18 seems to manifest an older stage of composition. Even if it is from the later Markan addition, and may be somewhat assimilated to Markan ways of expression as regards details<sup>50</sup>, it is on the whole an independent and comparatively ancient witness<sup>51</sup>.

The commission is given to go into all the world and *preach the Gospel* to all creation. The word *kerussein* means 'proclamation' and occurs rather frequently in Mk (14 times), Lk (9 times), Acts (12 times) and in Paul (17 times). Evangelization in the Early Church is expressed mostly by the use of this term which refers to 'preaching the Gospel'<sup>(52)</sup>. The fact that it does not occur at all in the writings of John and that the words

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49. The following is a comparative presentation of the texts. Mk 16:15-16 "*Go into all the world and preach the Gospel (keruxate) to the whole creation...*"

Lk 24:47-48 "*Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached (kerukthenai) in his name ... You are witnesses (martures) of these things...*"

Mt 28:18-20 "*Go therefore and make disciples (matheteusate) of all nations, baptizing them in (eis) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them all that I have commanded you...*"

50. Cf. the words *keruxate* and *to Euaggelion* which are typically Markan expressions. See Mk 1:1, 4.

51. Cf. O. Michael, "Der Abschluss des Matthäusevangeliums", *EvTh* 10 (1950/51), 21, where he rightly declines to see in Mk 16:15-18 merely an imitation of Mt 28:18-20 as is frequently done in commentaries.

52. Cf. Acts 8:5; 9:20; 10:37, 42; 15:21; 19:13; 20:25, 28, 31; Rom 2:21; 18:8, 14, 15; I Cor 1:23; 9:27; 15:11, 12 etc.

*matturein* and *marturia* are preferred by John<sup>53</sup> shows that there was a shift of emphasis in Evangelization in the Early Church itself. Perhaps Lk 24:47-48 giving both 'preaching' and 'witnessing' may indicate a period of transition in the matter. By the time of John those who through preaching, had come to believe in the Gospel had established themselves as a community of believers, namely, as a Church. And the primary outlook in John seems to be centered on the Church. This does not exclude in any way the missionary task or Evangelization, but only sees Evangelization in a new dimension, namely, a communitarian dimension.

Perhaps, traces of this change can be seen in Mt 28:18-20 where we have the word *matheteuein* instead of *kerussein*. *Mathe-teuein* is actually the second stage that is aimed at by *kerussein*. 'To be a disciple' is for Mt to be attached to the person of Christ, in whom the Trinitarian life is made present, and to lead a life fulfilling the will of the Father in heaven (Mt 12:48-50). So this refers to the Trinitarian life in Christ to which one is introduced, and which has an essential communitarian character of fellowship and sharing.

This may point to the later development of Evangelization in strict relation to the life of fellowship and love in the Church as found in the writings of John. The words *euaggelizomai* and *euaggelion* as also *kerussein* do not occur at all in the writings of John. It is the witnessing that comes to the fore, in view of the life of fellowship with the Father and with the Son and between all the members of the community (I Jn 1:1-4). The commission of the disciples is put in direct correspondence to that of Jesus: "As thou hast sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world (Jn 17:18; 20:21-23). The commission is directly joined to the bestowal of the Spirit. What Jesus has done on earth will be continued by his Spirit. It is in the realm of this activity of the Spirit of Christ that the disciples find their

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53. *Marturein* occurs in Mt once, Lk once, Acts 11 times, Paul 8 times, in the Johannine Writings 47 times, *Marturia* occurs in Mk 3 times, Lk once, Acts once, Paul 2 times, in the Johannine Writings 30 times.

missionary task in relation to the world<sup>54</sup>. The work of the disciples is to be joined even more directly to that of the exalted Lord himself, so that both are seen as one. It is the eschatological harvest in which the sower and reaper rejoice together (Jn 4:35f). The Lord's presence in this world is being accomplished by the existing Church in the world. The Church's main task lies in its right existence as a Church, which is the missionary existence, an existence of Communion and fellowship: "By this all men shall know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35).

This is not a phenomenon that is exclusively characteristic of the later stage. Along with the 'oral proclamation' (*kerussein*) of the Gospel, this witnessing value of the life of fellowship was also emphasized. The Christian community as presented in the Acts of the Apostles and St Paul is a community of fellowship<sup>55</sup>. St Paul emphasizes it specially in connection with the Eucharistic fellowship (I Cor 10:16 f). *Koinonia* becomes a favorite term to describe the living bond existing in the Church. To be a Christian is to have fellowship with God, with the Father and with the Son in the Spirit (I Jn 1:3,6). It issues in the brotherly fellowship of the believers (I Jn 1:3,7).

Thus the Church becomes the Sacrament of Unity by which the whole Universe will one day obtain its unity under Christ's Lordship, now really and visibly present in the Church. St Paul seems to refer to this, when in his Epistle to the Ephesians, he speaks about the predestination of the Church (1:3-12), about the unity of the Church resulting from Christ's reconciling action (2:11-18) and about the Church's function in relation to the Cosmos, variously expressed in the same texts. In Eph. 1:10 Paul speaks of God's will "to unite all things in Christ". Then in vv. 22-23 he says: "...and he has made him (Christ) the head over all things for the Church which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all." This means unmistakably that salvation and final complete unity are accomplished in and through the

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54. Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:7, 12-15

55. Cf. Acts 2:42; Rom 15:16-27



Church<sup>56</sup>. It is through the edification and growth of the Church that the aim "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13) is attained. Hence the Church is essentially missionary in its existence.

This does not suppress the *kerussein*, but enriches it. The missionary proclamation takes place through preaching substantiated by life. The right Christian life urges on to share it with others and this sharing takes place in words and deeds. Thus the real Evangelization as carried out by Christ through words and deeds—his whole life (Mt 9:35) is continued by him in his Church through his Spirit.

## Conclusion

By way of conclusion we would like to underline the following points:— First, Evangelization should not be considered as an addition to the Church. Rather, it is the progressive realization of the very being of the Church as a Community, which effectively makes present in the world the Trinitarian life communicated by Christ through his Spirit. This progressive realization of the Church, takes place primarily not so much by extrinsic addition to her members as by a dynamic diffusion of the life she possesses in the Spirit. The Church realizes her task of Evangelization in the measure in which she succeeds in diffusing this life in the Spirit in ever wider circles.

Secondly, the missionary task of the Church is based not merely on the commissioning by Christ, understood as an extrinsic command. As is clear from the missionary life Jesus and the disciples, it flows from the very nature of life in the Church, the command being the expression of what the Church ought to do in order to be what she is.

Thirdly, the proclamation of the Gospel is meaningful only when it is the natural effusion of the Gospel lived in and

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56. Here perhaps a reference could be made to the doctrine of Teilhard de Chardin, supposing Christ to be identified with the 'Omega of evolution', and Christianity as a 'phylum of love' within the world of nature. Cf. C. F. Mooney, *Teilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ*, N. Y., 1968, 94, 166.

by the proclaiming Community. Therefore, an undue preoccupation with oral proclamation, to the neglect of witnessing through life, not only makes our efforts ineffective, but goes against the very nature of Evangelization.

Finally, Evangelization, based on the universal salvific will of God, and tending towards the eschatological unity of the whole of mankind, is to be realized in and through a community of those sharing the same divine life, namely the 'True Israel'. The whole development of Evangelization as found in the Bible seems to culminate in the formation of that 'True Israel', the Church, which is, and has to be, the Sacrament of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind, bringing all men to full union with Christ<sup>57</sup>.

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57. Cf. Vat. II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, Ch. I.

# Vatican II and the Post-Conciliar Theology of Evangelization\*

This article examines three questions:

(I) What did people expect from the missions before the Council; and from the Council concerning missionary Activity after it had been announced?

(II) What did the Decree tell us in its final text which was published in 1965?

(III) What questions did the same Decree leave unanswered and open to discussion in 1970?

Already in 1962, missionary periodicals were asking the question: Have the mission come to an end? Other less radical periodicals asked for new missions.

These questions arose from the following considerations:

- (a) Concern about the possibility of salvation outside the Church;
- (b) the value of implicit faith by which a non-Christian would in fact be an "anonymous Christian";
- (c) practical doubts concerning the results till now of evangelization and also of the authenticity of the conversions made.

## I

If we try now to summarize the principal theological questions arising from the present considerations, we would group them under seven headings:

1. What are properly the place and meaning of the missions in the whole Church? Are they only an incidental activity, a kind

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\* This paper was read at the Nagpur International Theological Conference.

of *ad libitum*, or do they belong to the very nature of the Church and even of the plan of God? According to two often quoted texts of Protestant theologians: "Is the Church a mission by identity?" and "Is the mission, the mission of God?"

2. Will the missions continue to exist as distinct activities? Could we not say at present that everywhere you find Christians and non-Christians and have to exercise missionary activity? Or inversely and paradoxically, should we not say that there are no longer any missionary countries?

3. Supposing that missionary activity is still necessary, will it still remain possible to send foreign missionaries abroad to fulfil this task?

4. Even so, is it necessary or useful to trouble, through missionary activity, the honest conscience of honest 'pagan' who nevertheless will be saved through their good implicit faith?

Some theologians have arisen to study and applaud 'implicit faith' and to exalt anonymous Christians. Certain authors define this theory and others attack it, but in any case they produce in the Christian people a hesitation as to the necessity or usefulness of the non-Christian's meeting Christ and believing explicitly. Everyone is not as honest and balanced as Fr Rahner who, after having underlined the wonders of salvation that God can open to those outside the visible Church, takes care to note that the acquisition of an explicit Christian conscience, which has been up to now anonymous, remains not only useful but necessary. He repeats the same idea after the Council. The hesitation and perplexity of the masses and missionaries, however, still persist.

5. Does not missionary activity violate the religious liberty of man who should determine his own religious choice independently of any external pressure?

6. Suppose that notwithstanding all difficulties the missions should stay, do they remain the task of a special group of apostles or should they be the concern of every Christian?

7. Lastly come the fundamental questions: Whether the Church is missionary or not, is she always going to remain centralised and uniform? Should this movement, which has been



more accentuated for the last 100 years, continue, or should missionary work be left to the regional authorities?

## II

We now pass to the answers the Decree gave to the above questions.

1. What is the relationship of missionary activity, in all its depth and vitality, to God, Christ, and the Church?

The element which holds all three together, and which moves all three in successive and linked-up impulses, is charity, the force which urges a person to go out of himself and to do good to others gratuitously. This intratrinitarian charity, overflowing in some way, freely impelled the Father to create, then to save. It is because of this ecstatic movement of benevolence and bounty that the Son was sent, that the Holy Ghost was sent, and that the Church was sent. It is because of this movement that all missionaries have been sent. To describe these successive envoys, the Decree has followed the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* and has devoted to it Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Consequently we see that the Church is missionary because of her origins which give her her élan and internal force of charity. In accordance with the Decree of God the Father, the pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature as it is from the mission of the Holy Spirit that the Church takes her origin. The Church is missionary also because of her attitude towards mankind: the Church wishes to save by openly offering paternal love calling forth filial love, which should be extended to the whole of humanity. Such an offering of love is called, analogically, sacramental by the Decree, because through a visible exterior presence it brings about interior effects of salvation. "The mission of the Church is fulfilled by that activity which makes her fully present to all men and all nations" (No. 5). By the example of her life and by her preaching and by the sacraments and other means of grace, she can, and (we could add) she must, bring men to the faith, the freedom and the peace of Christ.

But this is the total function of the Church and concerns everyone, everywhere and at all times. Among other things

it includes missionary activity, but only as one of its specific forms in particular and not as the whole. One must agree on the meaning of this word "particular" which the Decree goes on to explain as "the differences to be found in this activity of the Church (general) mission itself, but due rather to the circumstances in which the mission is exercised" (No. 6).

This general mission of the Church encounters three classes of people: Catholics, other Christians and non-Christians. Based on this diversity, the Decree distinguishes "pastoral activity exercised among the faithful" (strictly speaking this term here means Catholics), the "undertakings aiming at restoring unity among Christians" and lastly "missionary activity" or the "missions" in general. It is with the last that missionaries are concerned. According to Rahner, the term "missionary" is an "irreplaceable term."

This specific form of activity of the Church is directed towards the "peoples or groups who do not yet believe in Christ."

2. One will notice that the territorial idea is not taken into consideration in the definition of missionary activity. The Decree has consciously willed to detach itself from geographical considerations so as to think in terms of anthropology and sociology, and it has almost always succeeded in doing so. Man is not an object fixed once and for all in a certain place and defined by this very situation. He is a living part of a living whole: family, tribe, caste, nation, people, professional group etc. In using the term 'peoples' or 'nations', the Decree aims at two things at the same time: it raises the missionary problem above the administrative, exterior and almost political aspect, and it makes us consider man not as a nomadic individual, which he is not in fact, but as a living part of a socially organic whole. It leads us to think and plan on a deeper and wider level, thus bringing us into contact with two essential tendencies of our time: anthropocentric and cosmic.

3. Much has been said about salvation outside the Church and this has weakened in Christians the feeling of urgency and necessity regarding missions. But the Decree in No. 7 has reaffirmed the necessity of the Church for people to be saved before it speaks of the intention of God "to lead those inculpably

ignorant of the faith without which it is impossible to please Him." The Decree intentionally inverts ideas expressed in the earlier draft.

Still more precisely *Lumen Gentium* (No. 16) while recalling that "whatever goodness is found among the non-Christian is a preparation for the Gospel" remarks that "rather often men deceived by the evil one have been caught in futile reasoning and have exchanged the truth of God for a lie." This stern text was added later despite the objections of those who considered it too harsh. In the view of the Council, the normal and complete way to salvation is through the knowledge of Christ, through faith, baptism and the communion of grace abounding in the Church.

4. Sometimes missionaries have been accused of aligning themselves with political powers and engaging in politics. The Council had heard this criticism and some of its exhortations are intended to disarm it completely. It is thus that the Church proclaims her desire of not interfering in the political domain of non-Christian groups: "The Church in no way desires to inject itself into the government of the earthly city. She claims no authority other than that of ministering to men, with the help of God in a spirit of charity and faithful service" (No. 12).

This necessity of humble and poor service is recalled in No. 3 by a reference to the incarnated Christ. Above all, the necessity of sympathy appears several times.

Lastly, respect and loyalty in the manner of introducing and presenting Christ appear in this prohibition of the Missionary Decree: "The Church strictly forbids forcing anyone to embrace the faith or alluring or enticing people by unworthy techniques". This brief order has been confirmed by post-conciliar documents against illegitimate proselytism.

5. The identity of the Missionary has been contested and often obscured in recent times. How does the Decree define a missionary? First of all a missionary is a man who has received a special function: "Christ the Lord always calls whoever he chooses from among the number of his disciples to be sent with Him to preach to the nations" (No. 23). This little phrase is

rich in meaning. The text goes on to say, further, that being a missionary is "to be marked by a special vocation and to be set apart for the work to which (one has) been called".

But what is this work? Here we have three elements to define a missionary; The first is the official character of his mission. He is sent by a legitimate authority and it is in obedience born out of faith that he receives this order.

The second element is that missionaries go out (*exeunt*), but it is necessary to ponder this word for some time. We know that the Decree has taken care to define missionary activity not in geographical terms but in sociological ones. Therefore, we must consider the going out (*exeunt*) of missionaries in sociological terms and even more in socio-religious and ecclesiastical terms. The missionary leaves a society which has been Christianised and where the Church is present, to go to a society where Christ has not been announced or the Church planted.

The third element is the will to do true mission work, which, in the final analysis, is to announce Jesus Christ, and to set up the Church which is His Body. Of course, there are many ways of attaining this goal, but as the Church has been established essentially for the extension of charity which must unite all men to God and to one another, this work is realised through all forms of charity which comprise Christian living. The missionary then can and must serve the needs of humanity, share in its troubles and try to alleviate them as far as he can.

Chapter II of the Decree speaks of the above mentioned question and *Gaudium et Spes* elaborates it abundantly. As it is God who sends the missionary, the missionary is truly a *philanthropos*, according to the beautiful expression of the Fathers of the Church: but he differs from other *philanthropoi* because he sees man in the full light of his origin and his destiny: as creature and son of God, the God of Love. Therefore, to attain



complete happiness and realize his full vocation, man must hear and accept the call to love God and respond to it in the obedience of faith in Jesus Christ. The missionary is a *philanthropos* from and for God's love; he has been sent in order that "they may acknowledge Him and Jesus Christ whom he has sent", because only in this way can we attain eternal life.

The missionary who would renounce this final redemptive intention, or ignore the supreme value which it has in his life, would lose the essential and central element of his vocation.

In this light, the fact of working in one's country or in a foreign land, of being a priest or not, is only an ulterior specification, necessary if only to clarify the position of each person. This is why the Decree has inserted this specification in the definition of a missionary: "Be they autochthonous or foreign, priests or religious or laymen."

The above are five principal questions which have been solved by the Decree.

### III

The Decree which has brought us much light and a good number of answers, has left unanswered a number of important points.

1. The first problem concerns the relation between the divine means and the mission or missions of the Church. Some theologians have found no special reason to connect the divine missions with missionary activity rather than with any other ecclesiastical activity. The Church is "sent in all the aspects of her life, everywhere and always".

We easily admit that the general mission of the Church includes other aspects besides missionary activity and we have already enumerated them in the second part of this paper. However, between missionary activity and the historical mission of Christ, in its inspiration and in its initial movement of charity towards men for their salvation there is a special similitude. In both cases we have the historical and visible beginning of a new salvific contact and action which will lead to a "new creation"

and a "new man". Imitating the coming of Christ on earth, the missionary "enters in a new and not yet seen way into the history of a new determinate group of men". We shall try to study this affinity of the ecstatic movement in Christ and in the missionary in the Theological Conference on Vatican II held in Rome in 1966.

## 2. To whom is missionary activity directed?

People sometimes say: To the world, but without clarifying the meaning of the term. Does it include simply humanity or does it also include the cosmos? Or, more precisely, the world as a profane reality to which we must bring the salvific sacramentality of the Church? Or, even, more negatively, along the lines of the vocabulary of St John, the world as sinful and corrupted?

Others say, as the Decree itself says, to peoples and groups. What groups? All human groups or only some of them? Or some classes in a people (perhaps a Christian people) which includes other classes? Which classes? And why?... more radically what is the definition of a people of a society, and also of the term *Gentes* in the very first sentence of the Decree and in the new name of the *Congregatio Pro Evangelizatione Gentium*? In the Bible 'nations' has a certain meaning, but it has another meaning in modern languages. What meaning does the Decree adopt?

We often say that it is directed to non-Christians or 'pagans' (a term to be carefully avoided) or even of persons who do not yet believe in Christ. Here the problem is differently proposed but it remains: What does it mean to believe in Christ? We enter here into the vast and complex question of human religious attitudes treated in *Lumen Gentium* No. 16; but how vaguely! We read "Those who have not yet received the gospel are related in some way to the people of God.. the plan of salvation includes those who acknowledge the Creator.....God is not far distant from those who seek the unknown God," etc.

One is at a greater loss when the text immediately adds: "Rather often more have been caught in futile reasoning and have exchanged the truth of God for a lie....."

The above general affirmations, at the same time, leave undetermined the exact nature of non-Christians and of their relation to the Church....

### 3. The effect to be obtained by missionary activity

It is evident that the Decree does not only consider the individual and present salvation of men as the end of missionary activity, but also collective and eschatological salvation in a Church which is the sign, the instrument, and the beginning of the final communion.

What does such a salvation include actually in its fulness? What place and role has the profane world in it? What is the role of the cultural, moral and religious values of the peoples in such a salvation? Moreover, what can be considered as "a value" in the total perspective of the coming Kingdom? It would not be enough, here, to resuscitate, as some theologians do, the idea of shalome, as it existed in the Old Testament, where it was so much employed in horizontal and restrictive perspective. Should we not rather affirm and proclaim the pungent flavour of the evangelical salt, the need of crushing it? Is not the 'scandal' of the cross the only true victory?

*Assumer le monde*... certainly. But in what measure have we not to "save it through fire"? The idea of purification of the non-Christian values (either Western or Eastern) has been intentionally added, in the Decree, to some too optimistic texts, in order to keep a right balance between destroying and perfecting... What balance?

### 4. The two dynamic aspects in missionary activity

In every activity of the Church, two different aspects, the charismatic and the hierarchical, are always united and work together. But let us not forget that the exercise of authority, when legitimate and coming of God, is also a form of charism, perhaps the highest but also the heaviest burden to carry.

To keep the balance between both these aspects is not easy. Perhaps in past activities the institutional and hierarchical aspect has been exaggerated and too prevalent.

But if the charism of the internal inspiration must now take a greater part, and express itself in public, whether it be the inspiration of an individual, a diocese, or an episcopal conference, how far should it go in order not to destroy but to promote the unity and communion of the whole Church: unity and communion required by the unification of the modern world and which asks for at least a minimum and central direction. In missionary activity and in every other activity of the Church, are Christians erratic nomads or are they rather a communion and a society, both spiritual and visible, in faith and in action, as is perfectly explained in *Lumen Gentium*, no. 8?

And therefore in what measure must individual initiative seriously take into account the great and universal necessity, which is often more important than some local needs?

#### 5. The perennial character of missionary activity

The famous watchword, born with this century, is proposed to Christians: the evangelization of the world in this generation. Some persons understood 'in this generation' to mean within this generation. But this is not the meaning and it has not been the result.

But, whether it be in ten, twenty or hundreds of generations, the fundamental question remains: Is missionary activity, by its own nature, a temporary action which admits eventually of achievement or on the other hand must it stop at once because of the given situation, and therefore end earlier than the visible Church of the world? Should it be an activity which the Church might interrupt *ad libitum*? Or is it an essential aspect of the permanent relation between the Church and the world which must last till the end of time? Is it true that missionary activity is necessary to the existence of the Church? Without a Church you cannot have missionary activity. But would a Church really and fully exist without missionary activity?

#### 6. Missionary spirituality

The Council speaks of missionary spirituality, even if it does not use this particular term, but it seems that it does so in a rather traditional manner. Virtues are enumerated and



recommended one after the other, without a central dynamic idea uniting them together. It is necessary to start from a deepened theology of “sending” and of “going out” and elaborate a truly synthetic missionary way of spirituality. The heart of such a spirituality would be precisely this movement, this élan of natural and super-natural love towards non-Christians in order to offer them in our witnessing word and life. Jesus Christ as true God and true man, the ideal image of man (Decree Nos. 8 and 9).

The whole complex of the choices and attitudes of a missionary should be illuminated and commanded by this vision: sending in the Spirit by the Church as society and as communion; going out in the Spirit, according to the charism of the individual answer. To the missionary, God should always appear not only as the Father, but as “the Father who sent me”. To sustain and promote the mystical and unitive aspect of missionary spirituality, we should have recourse to the gospel of St John with its deep view of the internal dynamism of an overflowing charity: *Caritas diffusiva sui*.

Accurate theological researches are yet to be done and beautiful spiritual experiences yet to be had in order that the theology, spirituality and methods of the missions may become one and the same harmonious unity.

For the progress of the missions, sociological and methodological reflection is necessary- However, spiritual reflection and apostolic prayer are even more important because missionary activity is an act of natural and supernatural love.

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# Some Thoughts on Evangelization and Dialogue\*

## 1. A problem of the Church in Asia today

An important situation is now being built up in the Church in many Asian countries. In spite of very much that has been done by the Church for her progress and the service of the peoples in Asia, there is a growing conviction among the more enlightened and dynamic sections of the Church that in her activities and orientations she is fundamentally *irrelevant* to the main needs, aspirations and concerns of the people of our time. The Asian peoples are moving much faster ahead than the Church personnel in their expectations of development and social justice, and their efforts to realize them. The Churches have been concerned more with social services than with radical transformations of the mentalities and structures of society desired by the peoples today.

In addition to earlier criticism of the work of conversion to Christianity, there is now a growing crisis within the Church itself. Over the past five or six years there has been an alienation of the more radical youth specially the students. But during the past two or three years one can notice an alienation of the persons who have given or wish to give their life to the service of the Church. There are quite a few priests, brothers and sisters in Asian countries who are concerned about the meaning of their lives as priests and religious. Already in the past two or three years, in different countries some have left the priestly and religious life.

This crisis is perhaps more acute among the seminarians. In many countries the number of vocations is not on the increase, and the quality of those joining is not what it was a decade or

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two ago. Seminaries in Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Malaysia, Ceylon, and in some parts of India have had to face the problem of growing disaffection of the students with the prevailing programmes of formation.

Catholic Students are also very concerned about the irrelevance of the Church in India. In the statement of the National Leadership Camp, Goa, May 1971, they say:

“a great number of the youth we represent are disillusioned and frustrated with, as well as alienated from the Church as we know it... We would like to emphasize the urgency of the situation – if the Church does not take a more positive attitude to the progressive movements of our times and base its whole outlook and action on an incarnational theology of involvement and hope, the Church in India will lose the Indian Youth.”

Why is it that this position has arisen in Asia too, in spite of the openings made by the Second Vatican Council? One of the reasons for this is the *crisis of credibility* regarding the Church. Almost everywhere the leadership which voted for change at Vatican II has not gone ahead fast enough to satisfy the expectations and needs of the people including many of the clergy. On the contrary, in many places it seems to be applying the brakes to the processes of Church renewal and the effort to be relevant to man and society. The crisis is not yet quite overt in Asian countries, but it is gathering momentum. Time will tell how far the processes of updating will succeed, or whether, on the other hand, traditionalism will contain these forces. Perhaps the crisis will be so pronounced that many priests and religious will be completely alienated from the institutions and policies of the Church. In some places, time is already running out.

## 2. Jesus Christ

Now that the traditional basis of our intellectual convictions are being deeply questioned, and dogma is being reformulated, and many principles of morality are being ques-

tioned, we must rebuild our faith on secure foundations. We have to return to the sources, i. e. to Jesus Christ and the Gospels. We need to rediscover Christ.

Jesus of Nazareth is becoming better known today in his diverse aspects:

- (a) He was always kind and considerate, meek and humble, poor and close to the people.
- (b) Jesus also presented a new faith of *personal* liberation from sin and the constraints on a dignified human existence. In their personal encounter with others Jesus helped people to be themselves more authentically, more sincerely. A dialogue with him was an ennobling, liberating reality. As we go through the gospels we see how he helped others, healed them, consoled them, pardoned them, built their faith, and urged them on to meaningful lives of service, sharing and worship. He was for a genuine, true, interior human fulfilment of everyone, rich and poor, young and old, man and woman, – Zachaeus, Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, the rich young man, the tax collector, the woman taken in adultery, Peter...
- (c) Christ's teaching was also a *profound contest against the social evils* of the day and the presentation of a new vision of man and the world. He courageously championed the dignity of the human person and the primacy of loving, unselfish service as the supreme value in a new vision of man and the world. In every instance of a dichotomy or apparent clash of values he favoured the one that was for the dignity and freedom of the human person.

He openly, courageously and continuously *contested the alienations* of the day on account of which the poor Jews and their neighbours were exploited by their well-to-do countrymen. Thus he opposed the domination of the law over genuine love, of the letter that kills over the spirit that vivifies, of the hypocritical Pharisees over the humble Publicans, of the guilty accusers over the adulterous woman, of the Sabbath over man, of the



vendors in the temple over the worshippers, of Dives over Lazarus, of the proud Jew over the Gentile, of established superstition over true religion, of formalism over sincerity, of dishonest leaders over the poor.

He was killed at a young age, because he was considered a threat to the civil and religious establishment of the Jews and the authority of imperialist Rome with whom the Jewish leadership had compromised and collaborated in exploiting the poor. He gave his life as a seal of his radical and revolutionary message of universal brotherhood in justice, truth and love. "Greater love than this no man hath, but to lay down his life for his brothers."

The resurrection of Christ was the divine sanction of Jesus' option in his contest with the unjust system unto death. The risen Lord is the first of the new human order which triumphs over personal sin and social evil and is constituted in a state of permanent eschatological bliss. He is the pledge of God's un-failing fidelity to those who choose the path of truth, righteousness and unselfish love. He is also the Lord of human history, the cosmic Christ in whom all things shall be eventually recapitulated, reconciled, restored, as St Paul says so eloquently. He is the permanent revolution in human life and human history, ever contesting the inadequacies of a given situation and ever building the new heaven and the new earth which is the everlasting kingdom of God.

### 3. The mission of the Church

Christ founded a new community of his followers to conduct a movement of love and service throughout time and history. His supreme message and command was: "This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you... I am the Master and have washed your feet - go and do likewise..." His call is to the understanding of human life, personal and collective, in this deepest dimension of loving service, because God is love, God is the father of all; all men are brothers and are called to the constitution of the family of God, ultimately in the new heaven and the new Earth.

The mission of the Church is therefore to be this community of love, and help realize effectively God's love for all

mankind, and the love of men for each other in God through Jesus Christ. The Church has to be a sign and a means of building the total Christ in humanity by transforming men in unselfish love. Her mission, therefore, is this, and the building of a human community on earth on the basis of unselfish love which includes other basic gospel values such as, justice, truth, freedom and peace. The Church serves to build the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is constituted by conscious or implicit participation in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ when human beings and groups die by unselfish, sacrificial self-giving for the others – even when they do not know Him. It is begun on earth and ultimately realized and constituted forever at the end of time.

It may be debated whether our material achievements belong to it. However, it is certain that the genuine love that animates any human action is of eternal value and remains for ever in the kingdom. The criterion for participation is ultimately our loving, unselfish concern for our neighbour, e. g. the Good Samaritan... and especially Mt 25: "I was hungry... come into my kingdom."

The mission of the Church is therefore to actualize these values of the Kingdom here on earth, wherever possible, in the small rural areas, and in the cities, as well as among bigger human groups, among nations and in the whole world according to her light and her resources at a given time and in a given place. Christ has given the Church the command to go and teach all persons and nations to the end of the world and to form communities of believers in Him, who will bear witness to Him to the end of time.

It is necessary to understand the relationship between the mission of spreading the good news and the movement of loving service in building persons and communities into the Kingdom of God, by transforming their ultimate values.

#### **4. Evangelization**

Evangelization is generally understood, in present-day theological literature, as the process by which the Church presents the gospel message to those who do not know it or have not

accepted it as the word of God. It is thus distinguished from catechesis and pastoral guidance which are concerned with the presentation of the word of God to believers and the conduct of their life according to it. It proclaims the message – the Word – and bears witness through believers.

Discussions on Evangelization generally seem to presuppose that Christians are the evangelizers and that others are only the recipients of the message and of faith. However, the idea of dialogue brings in another dimension of receptivity in the believer which needs to be investigated further.

It is useful to distinguish between the realization of the Kingdom of God and the establishment of the local Church, whether Roman Catholic or of any other Christian denomination. The two though linked together must be carefully distinguished if we wish to avoid many ambiguities that pervade the present field of study. The end of all evangelization (as of catechesis) is the realization of the Kingdom of God, i. e. the actuation of the values of the Kingdom of the gospel in the persons, groups and structures of the present world. As Jesus said at the beginning of his ministry he had been anointed “to preach the good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives... to set at liberty those who are oppressed...” (Luke 4:18).

The Church as an institution grows visibly as her numbers increase, and her resources and work, though her own inner dynamism depends on her interiorization of the gospel values. However we cannot equate the visible Church and the Kingdom of God though the visible Church is an essential part of it. The ultimate aim of evangelization should be the realization of the Kingdom; but this has often been understood as the spread of the Church through conversions. This attitude, which has its value, has also been responsible for many aberrations in the evangelizing work of the Christian Churches. One has only to reflect on the great rivalries of Christian denominations in mission countries to the detriment of both the Churches and the people.

The visible Church, or any given denomination, is a means and intermediate end of evangelization but not its unique means

or ultimate goal. The means of evangelization are all those persons and agencies that help in the realization of the values of the Kingdom and they, of course, include Catholics and other Christians who are aware of the gospel and try to live its message. The existence of an enlightened, viable, self-reliant Christian community that is truly evangelical can be an immense contribution to the growth of human and gospel values, and hence it is desirable and must be worked for; likewise the existence of other religions that are faithful to their ideals.

The Church is a sign of the gospel; but it can also be, and in some ways, is a *counter-sign* and a *counter-witness* that prevents some from seeing its true meaning. Today many persons and groups, especially youth and workers even find the institutional Church an obstacle to their belief in Jesus Christ and his Gospel. She fails to be a credible sign of what she wishes to proclaim, and alienates many from the faith. The Church herself needs to return to the gospel, and to be evangelized.

Whether many persons and groups that call themselves Christians, have really been evangelized is open to question. It is sometimes said that certain areas of Europe which have become de-Christianized were never really evangelized. Likewise can we believe that all the baptized in recent decades in Asian countries such as India have first been well evangelized? Or have conversions been due to rather superficial attractions? The baptized too often need to be evangelized, i. e. to accept the gospel message and its values. Similarly the Church in her members and structures needs continual reformation. In so far as others may reveal the gospel values to the Church and bring about a conversion this process may be called an evangelization. It may of course be termed catechesis. What is more important in this matter is the reality rather than words.

Revelation in Christ is an on-going process in which God's message is made manifest to man. The events of the world, the movements of our times and the values involved in them, reveal to us the operation of God's Spirit in time. Hence the response of faith has to be ever renewed. New circumstances and situations demand a certain newness of faith, a conversion. Rapidly changing times require a constant effort at discerning the Spirit



of God operating in events and human history. The response to them is a sort of conversion which requires changes in mentalities and structures. Believers too thus need a continuing process of return to the gospel values through events – an evangelization.

## 5. Dialogue

Dialogue is a mode of the process of evangelizing and being evangelized. Through honest dialogue we can bear witness to the gospel and be provoked to be more evangelical ourselves. If dialogue has as its aim primarily the conversion of the other party to our denomination it will not easily escape the charge of proselytism.

Dialogue should include a sincere listening, appreciation, discerning, and learning from and accepting each other. It should signify a preparedness to convert oneself to the genuine values proposed or represented by the other party so that both may work together for human betterment. For us it means also the building of the Kingdom of God, motivated by Christ and inspired by his values. Dialogue must thus affect both sides of the encounter and lead to a *mutual conversion*, to a convergence in favour of the positive values that mankind seeks.

It must also lead to a rapprochement of groups in society. This is an even more difficult dialogue than that of individuals. The growth of understanding among religions, ideologies, nations etc., is progress towards the Kingdom of God both now and eschatologically. It requires quite a different approach from the dialogue among individuals, and especially individual conversions. The dynamics of groups would play a bigger role in such a dialogue. Dialogical Evangelization in this sense of a convergence of groups towards the common good can be called *Macro-Evangelization*. It should include a consideration of the one world, the planetary situation, in which mankind lives today.

Dialogue must imply a twofold conversion or mutual motivation to the good, a mutual evangelization. The building of the visible, institutional Church may be a consequence of such a dialogue – and a desirable one – but it should not be the ultimate aim or ulterior motive of dialogue with persons of other

faiths or of no religion. The honesty and purity of intention of our relations with others should be such that we should want to be good, just and fair to others in thought, word and action for their own sake, and not in order to build our own Church as an institution or visible society. There must be in us a sincere respect for the other person even in our desire to communicate something which we consider a priceless treasure, viz., the conscious faith in Jesus Christ and organized membership of the Church.

Men must never be made a means for the increase of our power or position as a Church. They must be served genuinely, disinterestedly, for their own sake and as they are. Evangelical dialogue thus requires a great sensitivity of spirit in the search for the true and the good together, without a desire to pressurize the other person psychologically or financially to accept our point of view and join our organization. The greatest possible integrity of purpose is, in the final analysis, the best witness to the gospel, to Jesus Christ and even the institutional Church. The impurity of our motivations has provoked widespread antipathy to the efforts of the Christian missions in many parts of Asia especially among the more enlightened groups. We sometimes convert individuals and antagonize whole groups or communities.

The final goal of evangelization should be the common acceptance of the human-divine values revealed to us in the gospels and in the whole of human history. In this the process of evangelization is mutual. Christ can and does speak to us through the gospels and the tradition of the Church today as well as through the signs and events of our times including those of other religions and ideologies. Thus Mahatma Gandhi evangelized the modern world making it accept the radical social demands of the gospel and the power of non-violent civil resistance to the forces that oppress man. We have therefore to be ready to be evangelized by others in our honest dialogical encounter with them.

## **6. Some terms of Dialogue or areas of Evangelization**

In the theological and pastoral reflection on Evangelization it is now customary to speak of the dialogue of Christians with

other religions and with the cultures of the non-Western peoples. This is undoubtedly an important element. In this article, in order to keep it within the assigned limits of space, I shall not deal directly with dialogue with other religions and the ancient cultures of the East but rather with dialogue between Christians and aspects of modern society. These two have a relevance to evangelization and being evangelized. I have chosen a few significant aspects for their value in themselves and as symbols of the problem of evangelical dialogue with contemporary man. This article will refer to such a dialogue with (a) youth including students, (b) the poor, (c) with urban situations (d) with revolutionary processes, and (e) with international social justice.

Evangelization in Asia by Christians has generally tended to be directed towards marginalized groups in society, including foreigners in each country and the social outcasts. In dialogue with them Christians are not usually challenged in their basic postures; and there is even a satisfaction in the evangelizer in his paternalism in the presence of the really down and out. In a sense it is more difficult to be present as a messenger of the gospel among the more organized and articulate persons and groups even when they are underprivileged, e. g. workers, youth. New groups of Christians in many Asian countries are thus marginal to the main stream of their peoples' life and development... e. g. Vietnamese in Cambodia, Anglo Indians, Goans and Mangaloreans in Pakistan. A more effective evangelization requires the presence of the Church and of bearers of the gospel message in the mainstream of the life of the Asian societies.

### **(a) Evangelization and Youth**

Youth including students are a most important group in modern Asia. Today even Catholic Youth are being alienated from the Church, i.e. they are becoming de-Christianized in the sense of not believing much in the institutional Church as such. The Church has a function of evangelizing youth, including baptized youth.

For such evangelization the Church must be in dialogue with youth. There should be an appreciation by Churchman of the positive values espoused by youth and a serious critique

of their deficiencies. Youth today want greater authenticity, freedom, justice and meaning in the lives of people. They find religion irrelevant to man's basic human needs and aspirations; hence they tend to get estranged from religion. They want to change society through political action with an openness to different ideologies.

In order to respond to them the Church must encourage these values, and reveal to them their relevance to the gospel. The gospel is an invitation to the form of faith, worship and life that relate creatively to the youth culture of today, while challenging it to service and unselfishness. Such an evangelization of youth requires a renewal of the message and of the image of the Church, as well as of our understanding of Jesus Christ and of the prophetic role of Christianity.

In order to evangelize youth, the Church herself must be a bearer of the positive values they seek to foster. Here the Church too needs to be evangelized and purified; for the Church in our Asian countries is far from being appealing to youth. The Church is not conspicuous for her authenticity, her sense of freedom, her struggle for social justice, her relevance to politics, or the meaningfulness of her structures and relationships. The Church and churchman give an impression of being old and even antiquated.

Thus an honest dialogue with youth who are seeking a meaning of life beyond traditional religions must include both an appreciation and evangelical revaluation of youth culture and a rediscovery of the youthful dynamism of the Church itself. Such an evangelizing dialogue can be most attractive and meaningful to youth and fruitful for the renewal of the Church in her thought, her way of life, relationships and structures. Yet how slow we are to respond to this call of the Spirit in our times to such a mutually beneficial dialogue in the light of the gospel of Christ!

#### **(b) Evangelization of the poor**

Evangelizing the poor is not merely converting the poor to the Church – though this has its value. It means also presenting the gospel message of liberation to them in as effective a way



as possible. In today's world it must mean an effort to change the mentalities of the people and the structures of society so that justice and love may be realized among men. The spread of genuine love through well-meant sharing is a contribution to the building of the Kingdom of God.

This aspect of evangelization has been neglected very much by the Church in so far as it has tended to individual conversions from among the poor. Evangelization of the poor requires options in favour of the positive values of love and justice and action in the social and political field to realize more effective sharing.

The Church in so far as she tries to present truly the radical message of justice and love to society will also be evangelized by the process. She will have to be more prophetic in her proclamation of the message and more disengaged from the power structures of society in its way of life. For only a Church that is genuinely for the poor and the oppressed can truly evangelize them. At present they, especially the more socially conscious, are becoming alienated from the Church.

Another aspect of the evangelization of the poor is witness to evangelical poverty by detachment from riches and the facing of the insecurities of life as the poor have to do: The Church has to be poor in its collective witness and join in the struggle of the poor to improve their lot. This in turn requires profound transformations in our ways of thought, our ways of life and our fundamental options in society. The Church in Asia, which is a continent of immense poverty, has very grave responsibilities in this regard. It can help sensitivize the rest of the world to the gravity and urgency of the problems of the poor in Asia.

### **(c) Evangelization of cities**

Our methods of evangelization (which is even a pastoral activity) are adapted to rural areas and feudal societies. Today cities are an important phenomenon in most Asian countries. The decision-making processes in a society are concentrated in the cities; the city sets the pattern and pace of life for the countryside as well. Religion has little impact on the life of the city which tends to be governed by materialistic principles.

The evangelization of "secular" reality requires a special approach towards the cities. There should be an assessment of the life of the city in terms of its positive and negative values, and an active participation of Christians in eliminating the negative and fostering the positive ones. A certain amount of work is being done in this direction in a rather unrecognized and sporadic manner. If the Church is to consider seriously the work of evangelizing the city it must hold a dialogue with the realities of the city such as the agencies of trade, industry, banking, transport, housing, government, mass media, leisure, education, etc. Such a process is quite different from the presence of a missionary in a rural area, especially among the very poor.

The city can also have an evangelizing impact on the Church. It can help the Church to discover the values of the gospel in the new civilization that is growing up in Asia and the World. Christ speaks to us through the intense life of the cities - through the inter-relations of trade, business, politics, mass media, etc. The values of justice, fraternity, equality and love, take on a new dimension there. The meaning of the gospel sense of personality and community have to be rediscovered in our urban surroundings.

Likewise the process of dialogue with urban realities will, if earnestly undertaken, lead to transformations and new structures in the Churches herself. Evangelization will lead to a change in pastoral work too. How little are the present structures of parishes, dioceses, religious life and lay-apostolate related to the realities of the life of an urban metropolis! Yet in these areas too the Kingdom of God is being built almost without us.

#### **(d) Evangelization and the Asian revolutionary processes**

One of the important realities of modern Asia is its revolutionary tempo. China has gone through a profound revolutionary upsurge in the past twenty-two years, and other countries are in near revolutionary situations. The recent changes in most Asian countries are, in any case, of revolutionary proportions even when they are evolutionary in their processes. Asia is also heading towards a world revolution in which a redistribution of the resources of the world will have to take place.

To evangelize the Asian revolutionary processes, the Church must appreciate and sympathize with the needs and aspirations of the Asian peoples and their revolutionary urges. She has to participate in their efforts and struggles to change their own mentalities and socio-economic structures and those of other countries and continents. The Churches must use their enormous moral influence and widespread resources to further the liberation of the oppressed masses of the world – and these are particularly found in Asia. They can interpret Asian needs to the rest of the world.

The Churches have also to be open to those evangelized by the Asian revolution. We must repent that we have been largely insensitive and irrelevant to the Asian peoples in their basic needs and aspirations. In responding to these revolutionary situations the Church can also rediscover her vitality and the radicality of the gospel in all fields including that of political involvement. The Churches in Asia must change their mentalities and structures radically and rapidly. Their role in society must be more prophetic and less a maintenance of the *status quo*; more motivational and less institutionalized; more in favour of human liberation and less domineering.

If the Churches participate in the revolutionary process at the time when they are taking shape, they can also be creatively present in the shaping of the new societies that will emerge from the present turmoil. This is a much more important task for evangelization itself than a narrow preoccupation with domestic concerns and numerical expansion to the neglect of wider issues of the people, the nation and the world. Our task today is evangelization in a more communitarian, global sense, a sort of macro-evangelization of groups and trends rather than conversion of marginalized individuals.

We have had too much of a theology of stability, of fixed relationships, and hence we are not prepared to understand revolutionary times. We need a new theology that understands the world in its dynamic evolutionary processes and in relation to the revelation of the Scriptures.

**(e) Evangelization and international social justice**

Witness to the gospel values of justice and the sharing of freedom and peace should also be given by the Church at the international level. The Church at the world level has too long acquiesced in the present state of affairs in the world, and this is fundamentally unjust. It is partly the result of centuries of exploitation and colonization, now expressing itself in the form of a new economic, cultural and military colonialism of the great powers over the others.

The Asian peoples have long suffered owing to this injustice. At present the distribution of the world's resources is very unjust. 20% of the world's population controls 80% of the present productive resources, and the situation is worsening in spite of the so-called "development decade". The Christians have benefited from Western hegemony and colonialism. Hence the Asian peoples are deeply hurt and are unsympathetic to Christianity.

If there is to be any profound understanding between Asians and Christianity, the Churches must liberate themselves from their subservience to Western interests. For this the Asian Churches must interpret to the world the needs and rights of the Asian peoples. The Church in India must make common cause with the Indian people who form a large portion of the proletariat of the world. Evangelization must in the macro-sense begin with a genuine effort to build a just world order.

Asia is today the arena of the great powers of the world. War has been continually waged in Asia during the past four decades. The pressure of population is very great in sections of South East Asia. These problems lead to sudden explosions of a volcanic nature as in the Bangla Desh issue. Christians of the world must be sensitized to the crying demands of international social justice and peace. Only those who really experience the conditions in our countries can really evolve the relevant theology for the type of world transformation, or global revolution, that Asia needs. We must work for an understanding of China with its 800 millions. This is an important and neglected aspect of macro-evangelization.



The future of the world will be shaped in the next few decades by Asians – but Christians are hardly sensitive to this. Asia will remake the world whether we like it or not, with us or without us, and most probably in spite of us. If we are really concerned with the proclamation of Jesus Christ in this situation we must spell out the revolutionary dimensions of Christ's message at the global level and suffer for the realization of a more just world-order.

One is afraid that once again we are failing to see the signs of our times and the forces of revolutionary change will come from outside the ranks of religion and probably be anti-religious. We would then have only ourselves to blame for our blindness to the gravity and urgency of the situation and our lack of evangelical courage to commit ourselves seriously to so worthy a cause. Unfortunately, at present Christian Churches give the unmistakable impression of being part of the World Establishment and are quite complacent about it. Asians need peace and development with justice; as followers of Christ we must respond to this need and concern, if we really love man.

## 7. The need for socio-political action

Profound transformations are urgently required in India if human life is to be made worth while for the vast majority of her population. Pope Paul's sense of urgency in *Populorum Progressio* is most applicable to Asia. But such changes cannot be brought about without major political changes. What, then, should be the attitude of Christians and the Churches to politics which recent popes have called a most important area of charity? What is the witness of the Church to India in the political field?

Jesus said, at a solemn moment in his life, that he was sent to preach the good news to the poor, to release the captives, to liberate the oppressed (Luke 4. 18). The most pressing command he gave his disciples just before his death was "Love one another as I have loved you..." This is the substance of evangelization. Can we really help liberate the poor, or love one another, if we do not work to bring about a more equitable sharing of wealth and money in India where half the population

of 540 millions have only 85 paise per day, and the poorest 20% (i.e. over 100 million) less than 50 paise (C. T. Kurien, *Our Five Year Plans*, p. 122). 71% of the householders own 17% of the cultivated land whilst 14% own 64%.

God is love; love requires effective sharing and justice. In the modern world and in individual countries, sharing cannot be brought about without political action (legislation and its implementation, etc.). Therefore, political action is necessary for the realization of love and of the Kingdom of God today. Hence the Church, and Christians, including priests and religious, cannot be indifferent to politics. To abstain from politics is to be irrelevant to a major sphere of the realization of love and justice in our societies.

In fact we are really never out of politics, especially in democratic societies. Our supposed neutrality is in fact a support of the *status quo* including its grave injustices and corruption as in so many of our Asian countries. Sacred neutrality is often a form of complacency that is quite unChristlike. Unfortunately the Churches are so much on the side of the powers that be that it is difficult to say that they are really liberating the oppressed.

We need to rethink the role of Churches in the socio-political field. How far, and in what manner, should the priest and the religious be engaged in political activity? Does one's priesthood and religious state make one lose one's political rights and responsibilities? Would political involvement of priests divide their parishes? When politics involves danger and risks, can the priest only motivate the laymen to enter the fray while he himself is safe in his sanctuary? These issues are becoming more important in Asian countries and must be faced by the Churches and theologians soon, as many priests and religious are worried about the irrelevance of their ways of life to the needs, aspirations and struggles of our peoples. The concept and conditions of macro-evangelization must be further developed in this regard too.

"Evangelization and Culture" is another aspect that requires much attention. Modern theological reflection in India has been much concerned with the languages and traditional cultural values of the people. It may be useful to ask ourselves how far a *new secular culture* is emerging in India, especially in the cities.

Mass media are generating a new type of Indian who is more modern, scientific and secular in mentality while being Indian in spirit and soul. This is a phenomenon to be carefully studied and responded to. Evangelization has to take place according as people are and to discover the values in them and help them to reach their fulfilment through them.

## 8. Evangelizing the evangelizer

These considerations, which are complementary to the usual reflections on evangelization lead us to the conclusion that those of us who are responsible for it need to be evangelized owing to the very exigencies of our task. I shall briefly touch on some of these aspects.

The priests and the priesthood need to be evangelized so that they may be both teachers and learners: builders of the Kingdom more than mere conformists to a *status quo* in which the institutional Church itself may be involved: more prophetic than merely cultural, especially when the cult is so little relevant to human needs. At present many of them are very unresponsive to the problems which face man in India. Generally their interests are too clerical.

The religious who are among the main agents of the Church's effort of evangelization must also have a way of life that is liberated and liberating. How much of human personality is suppressed or repressed by the present modes of religious life especially among some groups! The congregations must not make themselves or even the institutional Church the ultimate value in their life and work. Service of the people in the building of the Kingdom must be the ultimate value: this in turn will transform us and make us better witnesses to the gospel. The training of the religious needs to be further reformed to enable them to be committed to their mission in the modern world.

The seminaries, both students and teachers, are cut off too much from the normal life and struggles of the people, and hence their thinking and way of life are so little relevant to the aspirations and problems of our countries. This is why theology develops so little with creativity within our seminaries.

Theologians need to be re-evangelized. They need to return to the gospel and to relieve themselves of some of their antiquated theological baggage into which they try to fit the peoples of the world and their eternal destiny. Theologians are partly responsible for the assumptions of Christians concerning the monopoly of salvation and truth which, even now, they almost implicitly tend to claim. Theologians need to become aware of the realities of the other religions of the modern world and also of the great sensitivity that evangelization and dialogue require. Their interests in India seem far too intra-ecclesial, or connected with ancient religions and ancient culture.

Bishops are the leaders of evangelization in the Church. One would like to be able to tell them that in many parts of Asia their style of living is a little incredible to people. Few can see in them the incarnation of the values of the gospel. They have to be evangelized also in the house of their authority, the personnel at their disposal, and their resources. They have to get together to rethink their role as witnesses to Christ among Asian peoples and in relation to the rest of the world. Priorities in the values, life and work of bishops have to be revised in the process of the evangelization dialogue.

If we may dare to say so, the Roman Curia, especially those who control the evangelization processes, can also learn from this dialogue. While being happy with the good results, they need to repent humbly for their enormous blindness in the past few centuries, e. g. in China and India, regarding methods of evangelization. How far have their mentalities changed with reference to modern issues? The Roman Curia needs to get its goals clear, to inform itself of the world, to be open to the realities of actual situations, to be rid of narrow theological assumptions, to be open to the different ideologies in the world. It must use its unparalleled position and resources to generate and encourage a movement of genuine love among mankind. It must champion truth and freedom even when it may be against self-interest. It can do much to give Asia the type of bishops, priests, and religious she needs. It can be a much more effective agency of service to man and thus build the Kingdom as well as bear witness to Christ and make the Church more credible.



## Conclusion

Many things have been said in this article very briefly. In sum it amounts to a requirement of a new theological approach, a new sense of priorities, new ways of living, and new relationships within the Church and a greater readiness to teach by learning and learn in teaching, i. e. share. Evangelization and dialogue are a challenge to the Church to be relevant to the modern world. Lest what is said should seem negative, one example may help us to indicate what is meant positively in this article. The Life of Pope John XXIII as pope is an example of a person who was both an evangelizer at a world level and one who was prepared to be evangelized by the others in the world of his day. His openness and his profound understanding of Christ made him both Christian and human, truthful and lovable respectful of others, and a more credible witness to the Church. May our Evangelization through dialogue learn of him who though high in office was also so loving to others and beloved of mankind.

The Church has an extraordinary opportunity in Asia today to enter the mainstream of our peoples' history and contribute to building new men, new nations and a new world. She may suffer in the process especially in transforming herself but this will also be the process of her own purification and growth. The Church can then really be the Church, a loving service to man, and a lovable witness to Jesus Christ, Lord and Master of human destiny.

Malabe  
Ceylon

Tissa Balasuriya

## BULLETIN

# Evangelization and the Catholic Church in Kerala

In the following pages we propose to discuss briefly the history of the Catholic Church in Kerala from the point of view of evangelization. The historical development of the Church in Kerala manifests three distinct stages. The first covers the long period extending from the first to the sixteenth century A.D. The second stage was inaugurated with the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries on the Malabar coast in the year 1500 A.D. and extends to the time of the Second Vatican Council. The third stage is the post-Vatican era in which the Church lives today. Each of these periods has its own distinctive approach to evangelization. We shall discuss them in chronological sequence with a view to discovering their distinctive characteristics. Before entering into the discussion of the subject proper, however, a few remarks of a general nature concerning the meaning of evangelization would perhaps be in order here.

In our discussion, the term 'evangelization' is taken in its broad and basic sense. *Euaggelion*, the good news, is the news of the advent of God's Kingdom (Mk 1:14-15). This Kingdom is realized in the person of Jesus Christ who is the personal manifestation of God's redemptive love for the world in history (Jn 3:16). Evangelization means the communication of this redemptive love. The communication takes place primarily on the existential plane and not on that of theories and ideas. This is clear from the answer Jesus gave to the messengers of John the Baptist who approached him to make sure if he was the Messiah. Jesus in answering them did not preach a sermon on his Messiahship; nor did he give any rational demonstration of it. He simply said: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard:

the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them" (Lk 7:21-22). It is evident, therefore, that evangelization does not consist primarily in preaching, if preaching means speaking to others *about* Christ and his Kingdom. If we want to stick to the terminology of preaching, we should rather say it means preaching Christ rather than preaching *about* him. The full implication of Christ's injunction to preach the gospel (Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15; Lk 24:47 ff) is brought out in *Acts* 1:8 which says, "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." Genuine preaching is a form of witnessing understood in the broad sense of the term and differs from other forms only in being more articulate. At its core, therefore, evangelization consists in confronting the world with the redemptive love of God manifested in the person of Christ with all its challenge to decision and response.

This confronting of the Gospel with the world contains different aspects and may take on different forms because both the Church which is engaged in the task of evangelization and the world which is being evangelized, are subject to the changing conditions of place and time. It contains different aspects because it is directed to the world in its totality and is concerned with life in all its manifold expression. In the task of evangelization therefore the Church stands in relation to every reality in the world and to every expression of human life. In our discussion we shall, however, limit ourselves to the following three aspects, i.e., the Church's relation to culture, to the other religions and to the civil society.

## I

We have already noted that the first stage in the history of the Church in Kerala extends over the first sixteen centuries of the Christian era. It begins with the missionary activities undertaken in India by St Thomas the Apostle. The St Thomas Christians of Kerala are the fruit of his missionary labours. Although our knowledge of the historical details of the development of this early Christian community is scanty, enough information

concerning their style of Christian life is available to us both from the vestiges of several ancient customs and institutions still extant among the St Thomas Christians and from the past: XV century written sources "which may be taken as reflecting ancient traditions in substance."<sup>1</sup>

The most striking characteristic of the Church during this first stage of its development is that it was thoroughly indigenous. The Christian community of this period was so much a product of the place that there was hardly anything which marked it out from the other communities of the place, except its faith in Christ. In their social life they followed Hindu customs and practices. Says Dr P. J. Thomas: "The Christians were not different from the Hindus, their fellow countrymen. On occasions such as birth, death and marriage both were following similar customs. Until recently Christians were following many Hindu practices such as *piliayoottu*, *thalikettu* and *pelakuli*.<sup>2</sup> Before the Synod of Diamper banned these practices there was no considerable difference between Hindus and Christians in social customs".<sup>3</sup>

Not only social customs but also religious art and expression were indigenous in character. The Christian Churches of the time closely resembled Hindu temples in architectural style. The manner of solemnizing feasts also was similar in many respects to that of the Hindus. In the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy and the administration of the sacraments they followed the East Syrian rite which was accepted from the Persian Church with which the ancient Kerala Church was in hierarchical

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1. P. J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, Bombay (1970) p. 29

2. *Pillayoottu*, *Thalikettu* and *Pelakuli* are Hindu ceremonies connected with birth, marriage and death respectively.

3. Dr. P. J. Thomas, *Malayalasahityavum Christianikalum*, Kottayam (1961) p. 22

For a more detailed account of such customs, Cf. P. J. Podipara, *op. cit.* p. 80-85, Cf. also A. Cherukarakunnel, 'Indianization among the St Thomas Christians', *Jeevadhara* Vol. I No. 4 (July-Aug., 1971), pp. 361-373.



relations before the sixteenth century. However, even here, except for the language and structure of the text, the mode of celebration was distinctively local<sup>4</sup>. The community, too, had its own way of managing the administration of the Church in which layman had an active role to play. Says Fr Podipara, "The administration of the local Churches was carried on by the assembly of the parishioners consisting of adult males and local priests. The senior-most priest was president, so to say, of the local priests (*desathupattakar*) and he arranged the services in the Church. The system is still continued among the non-Catholic Thomas Christians. The assembly spoken of above looked after the temporalities of the church, and also after the whole Christian life of the local community. "This assembly decided cases of public scandal, inflicting punishments which sometimes amounted to excommunication."<sup>5</sup> In short the Church as it existed in Kerala during this period did not appear to be a foreign religion. It was as perfectly a religion of the place as Hinduism, Buddhism or Jainism and was accepted as such by the other communities<sup>6</sup>.

The thoroughly indigenous life-style of the early Christians helped them to develop cordial relations with the other communities, particularly the Hindu community to which they had belonged before their acceptance of the Christian faith. Generally speaking the Christians lived among the Hindus in an atmosphere of mutual respect, and the thought that Hindu worship might be idolatrous seems to have been quite foreign to them. This mutual respect went even to the extent of co-operation in matters related to religion. As Dr P. J. Thomas notes, "In Kerala many of the churches are located near Hindu temples and shrines. This can be seen particularly in places such as Palayur, Paravoor, Kaduthuruthy etc. The relation between the temples and the churches was not limited to spatial nearness. There were many transactions between them as signs of mutual love and respect. Until recent times the custom persisted of temples lending elephants, *theevetti*, *alavattam*, etc. to the churches and the churches lending *theevetti*, *kathina* etc. to the temples"<sup>7</sup>.

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4. P. J. Podipara, op. cit. pp. 86-94

5. Ibid. p. 96

6. Dr P. J. Thomas, op. cit., p. 25

7. Ibid. p. 24

It is only in the context of these cordial relations between the Hindus and the Christians and the prevailing social structure determined by the caste system that we can understand the approach of the early Church to conversion work. Given the atmosphere of mutual respect, evangelization during this period was primarily a question of Christian witness. For several reasons there were no large-scale conversions during this period. First, being Indians in every respect the early Christians must have inherited the attitude of tolerance for which India is so well known. Secondly, in a caste-ridden society, disaffiliation from one's caste had serious social disadvantages. Finally, the Christians themselves were not free from caste feelings on account of which, like other 'high' caste Hindus, they did not freely mix with those belonging to the 'lower' classes. Thus the limitations imposed by the social structure of the time considerably limited the numerical growth of the Church during this period<sup>8</sup>.

The relations of the early Church with civil society were totally determined by the socio-political situation of that period. Generally speaking, during this period, Kerala was politically split up into a number of petty principalities. However the structure of society was the same everywhere. It was built up of a net-work of castes and subcastes related to one another in hierarchical order and each contributing its share to the body-politic of the country. The Christians occupied a high position in this hierarchy of castes and contributed their share to the common life of the society, specialising in such profession as "agriculture, trade and military service"<sup>9</sup>. Like others they accepted the society with its given structure and contributed their share to its management. Living in a static society where religion was accepted and respected they did not have to face the modern problem arising from the emergence of dynamic and secular society.

Summing up the preceding observations we might say that, viewed as a whole, evangelization during this first stage of the

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8. P. J. Podipara, "Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship", *Ostkirchliche Studien*, June 1959 p. 98.

9. P. J. Podipara, *op. cit.*, p. 83

history of the Church in Kerala was concerned with Christian witnessing in the given social set-up rather than numerical expansion. A thorough integration of the Church into the culture of the place and a positive approach to other religions, especially Hinduism, were also remarkable characteristics of this period.

## II

The second stage begins with the arrival of the European missionaries. The first group "consisting of eight Franciscans under the leadership of Friar Henry of Coimbra and nine others" landed on the Malabar coast in the year 1500 A. D. and began mission work first at Calicut and then at Cochin and Cannanore<sup>10</sup>. Gradually more missionaries belonging to other religious orders as well (Dominicans and Jesuits) joined them. They adopted the method of direct preaching reinforced by charitable works. This method was extremely effective in winning converts. The existing social situation helped it on. It was on the socially underprivileged communities living in the coastal areas that the missionaries primarily concentrated. They were the victims of the prevailing caste system. In every respect conversion to Christianity meant an improvement of their condition, particularly in the new political situation in the country. They accepted Christianity in large numbers and thus the Church in Kerala grew considerably large. Through the sustained efforts of the missionaries the Church continued to expand rapidly. It was during this period, in the favourable atmosphere created by the presence of the Western political powers that for the first time in Kerala conversion was undertaken on a large scale. The missionaries also did much to provide financial support to those who were converted and this assumed organized forms in later periods. Laudable efforts were also made to raise the converts socially and to provide them with greater facilities in the field of education.

The picture, however, begins to grow dimmer when we come to the question of the Church's attitude towards non-Christian religions and the local culture. In this sphere the spirit of cordiality and respect which had characterized the earlier period began to give way to the spirit of depreciation and disregard.

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10. George Frank Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India*, Manaktalas, Bombay (1964) Vol. I, p. 126

The chief reason for this difference of attitude seems to have been the following: The missionaries, being foreigners, had only a theoretical and superficial knowledge of the Hindu religion and culture while the native Christians had a deeper insight into them as they had lived in them from within. In their zeal to propagate Christianity little effort was made by the early missionaries to study Hinduism in depth and therefore it appeared to them to be little more than a bundle of errors and superstitions<sup>11</sup>.

With regard to the local culture and traditions, too, the same negative attitude is found. This was only natural because the culture in question was largely a product of the Hindu religion. In certain respects the local culture did stand in need of reform. The caste system is a clear example. But the negative attitude extended well beyond such obvious defects. Lack of acquaintance with the Hindu religion and culture does not seem to have been the only factor responsible for this attitude. There were also other reasons of a historical and theological nature. Unlike the Christianity of Apostolic times, which was extremely simple and supple, the Church in later periods became rigid and structure-ridden. The Christianity which was preached in India by the Western missionaries in the XVIth century and after was, therefore, a Christianity with a European garb. As this garb was understood to be essential to Christianity as such, Christianization implied also Westernization and consequently depreciation of non-European cultures and traditions.

The first consequence of this negative attitude was that the Christian converts of this period had often to transfer their loyalty to an alien culture. Disregarding the indigenous form of Christianity which has been existing in Kerala for centuries, the new community was organized after the manner of the European Church. In liturgy, organization and to a large extent in culture, the new community was made to resemble it. It is this situation which has made it necessary to Indianize the Indian Church today.

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11. Men like Robert De Nobili who was a pioneer in adaptation and Fr Johannes who dedicated himself to the study of *Vedanta* with a view to developing an Indian-Christian theology are significant exceptions to this. Moreover their field of work was outside Kerala.



A second consequence of this negative approach to the local culture and traditions was the Westernization of the ancient native Christian community which, as we have seen, was culturally Indian, liturgically Eastern, and hierarchically in relation with the Seleucian Church. Being unacquainted with the Eastern traditions and having a rather monolithic concept of the Church the missionaries could hardly understand the Indian and Eastern ways of the ancient community. They wanted to purify it of all such 'aberrations' and bring it into perfect conformity with the Church in Europe. The first efforts in this direction were made at Cranganore by a certain Fr Pentaedo from Portugal in the year 1512. They immediately provoked opposition. The relations between the ancient community and the missionaries which had been very cordial in the beginning<sup>12</sup> began to be strained. In spite of this, however, efforts at Westernization continued. Since it was thought that the presence of the Eastern bishops in Kerala was the chief obstacle in this process, measures were also taken to obstruct their continuance in Kerala.

The culmination of all these efforts was the Synod of Diamper convened in 1599 by Dom Menezes, Archbishop of Goa, "at which the Thomas Christians were prevailed upon to condemn the Patriarch as a heretic and schismatic and to swear they would not accept any bishop except the one *immediately* nominated by Rome. Note the word 'immediately'. The Patriarch thus condemned was Denha Simon who was in explicit communion with Rome, being also honoured with the sacred pallium."<sup>13</sup> A number of changes relating to various other spheres of Church life were also introduced. The same author continues. "The Synod enacted fundamental changes in the rite and the ecclesiastical laws of the Thomas Christians, dealt with doctrine, morals, discipline, abuses, superstitious practices and so on, often according to the idea of Dom Menezes as far as their meaning and application were concerned among the Thomas Christians. Certain decrees were contradictory while certain others were not objectively

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12. George Frank Moraes, *op. cit.*, p. 126 cf. also P. J. Podipara, *op. cit.*, p. 121-122

13. P. J. Podipara, *op. cit.*, p. 138

true, not to speak of generalizations and exaggerations seen in many, though many were excellent and useful".<sup>14</sup>

After the 'Synod' events followed in rapid succession. On Nov. 5, 1599 Francis Roz, S. J., a Spaniard, was nominated to the see of Angamaly, as the successor to Mar Abraham, the East Syrian Metropolitan of the Thomas Christians. On Dec. 20 1599, the archepiscopal see of Angamaly was made suffragan to Goa and thus the Thomas Christians became subject to the Latin hierarchy. In 1601 Francis Roz was consecrated Bishop. Bishop Roz introduced changes in the Mass, the ritual and portions of the divine office to make them conformed to the practices of the Western Church. In spite of repeated protests the same policy was continued by his successors and the gulf between the missionaries and the ancient native Christians kept on widening. Increasing discontentment led to such dramatic events as the *Coonan Cross Oath*<sup>15</sup> and culminated in the division of the ancient Christian community of Kerala into the *Puthenkuttukar* (the Jacobites, literally, the new party) and the *Pazhayakuttukar* (the Catholics, literally, the old party)<sup>16</sup>.

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14. Ibid. p. 139

15. This refers to the event which took place on January 3rd, 1653 at Mattancherry near Cochin where representatives of the Thomas Christians holding a long rope tied to an open-air cross known as the 'Coonan Cross', so says tradition, "swore they would never be under the Paulists," (ie. the Jesuits) (P. J. Podipara, op. cit., p. 152.). Needless to say that the reference here is to the Jesuits they knew, i. e. the Jesuits of that time and place.

16. After this split repeated attempts were being made to bring about unity between the Catholics and the Jacobites. In 1930, as a result of the sustained efforts made by the then Jacobite Archbishop Mar Ivanios a partial reunion was effected. On September 20, 1930, Mar Ivanios together with Bishop Mar Theophilos of Tiruvalla was received into the Catholic communion. A large number of their subjects followed them. In 1932, a hierarchy was instituted for them with Trivandrum as metropolis and Tiruvalla as its suffragan. Thus the Syro-Malankara Church came into existence in Kerala. They follow the West-Syrian rite which entered Malabar with the foreign Jacobites after the 16th century. The reunion movement is being continued today under the initiative of the Syro-Malankara Church.

We have followed out a little in detail the consequences of the neglect of the culture and traditions of the place because they show, in a striking manner, how disastrous the quest for uniformity in the Church can be. The one Church of Christ is also Catholic, and therefore her unity should never be monolithic. The Church, in other words, can only be a "diversified community of the faithful."<sup>17</sup> If this principle had not been neglected during this period of evangelization, the history of the Catholic Church in Kerala would have been different from what it is today.

Before we pass on to the next period one more aspect of the question remains to be considered, i.e., the relationship of the Church to civil society. Generally speaking, during this period (until India became politically independent in 1947) Kerala was the field of periodical conflicts between the different native kings, between the natives and the Europeans and between the different European powers themselves vying with each other for political supremacy. In an atmosphere of such political instability, the position of the Christians themselves could not but be a fluctuating one. However, it might be said that the Christians, on the whole, favoured the Europeans who were of help to them in many ways. Given the close association between missionary work and Western political expansion one can hardly expect it to have been otherwise. Whatever the advantages of this association, it had two unfavourable consequences: first, it created the impression among many that Christians are not fully Indian. Secondly, the spirit of expansionism which animated political colonization influenced evangelization giving it the colour of religious conquest rather than of evangelical witness. However, the missionary activities during this period have made notable contributions to society in the fields of education and social work.

The main characteristics of evangelization during it may be summed up as follows: It was emphatically conversion-oriented. There was greater concentration on the socially underprivileged sections of society and the numerical growth of the Church was considerable. However, aloofness from the local culture and

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17. *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, No. 58

traditions and a negative attitude towards non-Christian religions were also characteristics of this period.

### III

The contemporary situation of the Church in Kerala is considerably different from the one that prevailed in the two previous stages of its development. On the one hand, ever since India achieved political independence in 1947, radical and revolutionary changes have been taking place in the socio-political life of the country. On the other the Second Vatican Council has brought fresh insights into the nature and mission of the Church and envisaged fundamental reforms both in her internal life and her relations with the world outside, religious and secular.

We shall begin with the question of the Church in relation to culture. A summary statement of the Council's position on this point is found in article 58 of the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*:

"Living in various circumstances during the course of time, the Church, too, has used in her preaching the discoveries of different cultures to spread and explain the message of Christ to all nations, to probe it and more deeply understand it, and to give it better expression in liturgical celebrations and in the life of the diversified community of the faithful. But at the same time, the Church, sent to all peoples of every time and place, is not bound exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, nor to any particular way of life or any customary pattern of living, ancient or recent. Faithful to her own tradition and at the same time conscious of her universal mission, she can enter into communion with various cultural modes, to her own enrichment and theirs, too."<sup>18</sup>

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18. Ibid.



In this paragraph we find a simultaneous affirmation of the Church's transcendence of every culture as well as her need to become incarnate in all cultures. For the Church in India this implies a call to become a truly Indian Church and this is as relevant to Kerala as to any other part of the country. It is true that socially Christians in Kerala are not, as a whole, less Indian than others. But this is no longer the situation when we come to theological thought patterns, mode of worship, spirituality etc. For all these things we have been, for centuries, drawing upon Western sources. For us who have been trained in these thought-patterns this might cause little difficulty. But as the sacramental manifestation of God's saving love for the world, the Church has the duty to communicate her message not only to those within but also to those outside. Her liturgy, theology, spirituality etc. are therefore at one and the same time, ways of self-realization as well as of self-revelation. And if these are to be revealing to non-Christians the medium in which they are expressed must be transparent to them. Now, practically in all these respects, the Church in Kerala, remains largely a closed book to the outsider.

The relevance of Indianization to the Church in Kerala then, is clear. However, it is important to note that the purpose of Indianization is not just to make the Church appear Indian, but to enable her to fulfil more effectively her mission in present-day India. Hence the guiding principle in this matter cannot be a theoretical idea about the ideal Indian Church, but the actual demands of the concrete situation in which the Church exists today. But this obtains differently in different parts of India very considerably. Hence our approach to Indianization has to be pluralistic. The Church in different parts of India has to tackle this question in her own particular background. Such an approach, however, must be safeguarded against the danger of provincialism and isolationism. This is possible if we do not lose sight of the broader context of the whole of India. At any rate, the tendency to create uniformity is bound to end up in impoverishing the Indian Church. The unity of India is a unity in plurality and therefore the unity of the Church in India too, cannot be otherwise.

Like India's cultural diversity, the on-going cultural transformation of our society is an important factor to be taken into account in Indianization. The reason is the same in both cases: The objective of Indianization is to enable the present-day Church to fulfil her mission in present-day India. And the India of today is in the throes of a profound cultural transformation. If this is neglected Indianization will deteriorate into nothing more than an exercise in digging up fossils from the past history of India, an exercise which has little relevance to the actual problems confronting the Church. And it makes little difference whether these are dug up from the past history of Hinduism or from that of our own Church. Continuity with the past, of course, is an essential dimension of life. But this continuity consists not in a slavish adherence to the traditional forms of expression but in a vital assimilation of the positive values of the past. If the Church in India is not to become an archeological museum, we have to begin to concentrate on the India of today and adopt the forms of expression which are meaningful to our contemporaries whose eyes are turned to the future rather than to the past.

When we look upon Indianization as a means of making the Church manifest to India we find that it cannot confine itself to the religious sphere alone. Present-day India is the India of the poor millions who are struggling to liberate themselves from poverty and misery. In such a situation it is impossible for the Church to fulfil her mission as long as she has the appearance of being rich and powerful. To become truly Indian the Church has to share this poverty and misery in a recognizable way as well as the struggle to eradicate it. This is important, particularly in the situation obtaining in Kerala.

As concerns the relations of the Church to non-Christian religions, the present situation in Kerala may be characterized as one of peaceful co-existence. It is difficult to say, however, that this situation is the expression of a deep understanding and appreciation of the positive values of each other's religions. The basis seems to be more socio-political than religious. What one finds, on the religious plane, is a sort of internal isolation. The inner religious world of a Hindu or a Muslim, to a large extent, remains a closed book to the Christians and *vice versa*. One of

the chief reasons for this lack of understanding on the part of the Christians is the former policy of the Church which concentrated almost exclusively on the negative side of other religions. Today in the documents of the Second Vatican Council we hear a call to reverse this approach and put an end to religious isolationism. In the declaration on the Non-Christian Religions, for example, the Council exhorts the faithful to "acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among the followers of other religions" and "prudently and lovingly" to enter into dialogue and collaboration with them<sup>19</sup>. It does not in any way minimize the necessity of evangelization, but it does show that in the context of today's religious pluralism, inter-religious dialogue is an eminent form of it. This important new field calls for attention from the Church in Kerala today.

Entering into religious dialogue is bound to make new demands upon the Church. In the first place, she will have to re-think and express her message in categories intelligible to the followers of other religions. Fresh theological thinking is therefore, an indispensable pre-requisite. A second condition is an ability on the part of the faithful to distinguish the essential content of Christian faith from its accidental manifestations which, being subject to the conditions of space and time, are liable to change. Faithful adherence to current practices and willingness to follow directions from above are not enough in themselves. No fruitful dialogue is possible unless one's faith is both enlightened and personalized. This is necessary today, not only for those who are *ex professo* engaged in religious dialogue but also for every Christian. For in a pluralistic society like ours the meeting of religions takes place not only around the discussion table but also in the vast field of day-to-day life where the followers of different religions constantly meet and work together. It may not be a religious dialogue in the formal sense of the term, but it is in a way even more important than a formal dialogue. For it is on the plane of life and not so much on that of theoretical discussions, that the real value of one's faith can be brought to light.

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19. *Declaration on the Non-Christian Religions*, No. 2

This brings us to another important condition for inter-religious dialogue in Kerala, i. e., dialogue within the Church itself. It is clear that as long as the life she seeks to communicate to others is not realized in her own being, dialogue with other religions can have little meaning or credibility. Now, as long as the Church understands herself in terms of power and prestige rather than of witness and service, disunity is bound to come and mar her inner life. If the Church is to be able to confront others with the gospel she has first to confront herself with it and face the challenges it poses before her.

We come now to the third and final aspect of our question, namely, the Church's relation to civil society. Since the Church is a complex reality, i. e. "a visible assembly and a spiritual community", this relation too is of a complex nature. As a visible assembly she is, like other religious bodies, related to civil society as a part to the whole. But as a "spiritual community", i. e. as the sacramental presence of God's saving love for the world, her relation to civil society is that of leaven to the dough or of the soul to the body. Now this two-fold relation is so connected that the first is ordained for the second and is meaningless without it.

When we examine the practical attitude and activities of the Church in Kerala in the socio-political field (and this is true also about the Church in India as a whole) we find that she has understood herself all along to be a small society within the bigger one rather than as leaven in it. With the inauguration of secular democracy, the primary structures of society began to work independently of religion. Her attention was focused on the private sector and her energy expended in putting up institutions of her own there. It is true that as a private agency the Church, through her institutions, has made substantial contributions to society, particularly in educational and humanitarian activities. But the wider problems confronting society and the various tendencies at work in the life of the nation as a whole, for the most part, have escaped her notice, except when attempts were made to encroach upon the private sector and put limits upon her activities there. As a result the Church could not make much posi-



tive contribution to the shaping of the general policies controlling the life of the nation. It might of course be asked what possibly the Church can do concerning such policies when she forms only a small minority. It is clear that she cannot be anything more than one of many voices. All that she can and should do is to shed the light of the gospel upon the problems confronting society and to take on a shared responsibility in working out solutions through the laymen who, as independent citizens, are working in its different spheres. It is not a question of their being official spokesmen of the Church, but of their living the spirit of the gospel in the situation in which they are and in relation to the tasks they are called upon to fulfil as citizens. The contribution thus made may not be very spectacular and the Church may derive no glamour from it. But unless she is prepared to undertake this modest but vital task she will be pushed aside and remain a mere spectator instead of being a participant in the process of building up the nation.

The need for the Church in India to rethink her function in society becomes even clearer when we take note of certain fundamental tendencies at work in Indian society. As a result of the impact of socialization and secularization increasing pressure is being brought to bear upon the institutions in the private sector. The hold of the Church on her own institutions which operate side by side with those of the government is becoming ever weaker. At first sight this might appear to be only the result of political games played by the various political parties. In reality however the political parties are only making capital out of a certain evolution of society, by allying themselves with it, distorting it and giving it the colour of a revolution. This tendency certainly has to be opposed. At the same time, in view of the new situation that is emerging, the Church has to seek new ways of relating herself to society. The new situation is a call to the Church to merge, into the wider society so as to become truly its leaven, rather than to keep aloof in splendid isolation. In the long run, her influence will depend not so much on the number and size of her institutions as on the number of Christians who have a deep insight into their faith as well as the actual problems facing society. "It will depend on whether in parliaments and political parties, in trade unions and associations, in public authorities and private firms, universities and

institutions, in broadcasting and the press, there are Christians who are ready to make use of their Christian faith. But the purpose must be not to bring them back under clerical tutelage, by indirect methods, or even only to 'christianize' various spheres of life, but for Christians to share in the responsibility for them and to help to bring to realization the forces and possibilities for good in them"<sup>20</sup>. This means that if, in the future, the Church is to be able to influence society for good, she will have to begin to concentrate on forming laymen into mature Christians with a personal faith. It is worth examining in this connection how appropriate our pastoral methods are for this task.

Finally, in the light of the new insights into the social implications of the gospel and the increasing complexity of contemporary society the Church also stands in need of re-examining her approach to social problems. In the past her social concern was largely confined to humanitarian activities directed to individuals. Such activities are as necessary to day as ever before and will always remain a true expression of Christian charity. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that human misery and poverty cannot be eradicated merely by concentrating on the effects of social injustice upon individuals. We have to turn our attention also to the causes of human misery and these are not only personal but structural. The individual's life is always powerfully influenced and determined by the existing socio-political structures and, as life is perforce becoming ever more socialized, their influence on the individuals is constantly on the increase. Therefore, if the concern of the Church for the welfare of individuals is to become effective today, it has to extend beyond them to the structures of society.

The need for structural changes becomes even clearer when we take note of the fact that the ultimate objective of the gospel in the world is not only the salvation of the individual but also the transformation of the whole cosmos. All creation is "groaning in travail" and longs to be "set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). Hence "the Church has failed to convey the whole message of

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20. Heinz Zahrnt, *What Kind of God? - a question of faith*, London, (1971), p. 131

the gospel as long as it only proclaims the personal salvation of the individual and gives him private and individual help. The proclamation of the gospel must also be extended to political and social structures. The Church has its part to play in seeing that the structures are as just as possible, and that they are maintained if they are of use, healed when they are ailing and changed when they are unjust,"<sup>21</sup>

In view of her mission in present-day India, the Church has to make a determined effort to transcend her past. Instead of mechanically repeating a stereotyped pattern of behaviour she has to react in a truly vital manner to ever-changing situations, and develop her individuality in the various spheres of life — in theology, liturgy, spirituality etc. — in dialogue with contemporary India. In a dynamic and pluralistic society like ours, dialogue is the medium *par excellence* of evangelization. The greatest obstacle, in this respect, is the recurring temptation to reduce the gospel into law and to get settled in a fixed mode of existence. To be able to fulfil her mission in present-day India, therefore, the Church has to resist this temptation and adopt an open and creative approach to her task.

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21. Ibid. p. 219

# Book Review

**THE PRIESTLY MINISTRY**, Report of the International Theological Commission (*Le Ministère Sacerdotal*, Paris, Cerf, 1971) translated into English by James Dupuis, S. J. and published by the Theological Publications of India, Bangalore-12, 1972

The nature and function of the priestly ministry has been a topic of great interest in recent theological literature. Discussion and seminars have been going on to find an adequate answer to this question which affects the very structure of the Church. The Conciliar statements on this matter do not seem to satisfy the quest because of the changing structures of modern society and the challenging problems posed by them. Besides, the increasing number of those who leave the priestly ministry is also a factor which demands study and serious reflection.

The traditional concept of the priestly ministry with its strong emphasis on the cultic aspect is being seriously questioned. This particular situation was the immediate background of a study made by the International Theological Commission. Its report was a preparation for the Bishops' Synod held in Rome in October 1971.

It was approved by the Commission as a "working paper" to be transmitted to the Synod of Bishops. As is observed in the beginning of the report, the authority of the entire Commission is not extended to all the details of this report.

In this study there is an earnest attempt to do justice to the different aspects of the priestly ministry. It begins with an analysis of the different symptoms of the present crisis of the priestly ministry and tries to find the theological reasons for the emergence of this situation. Then it proceeds to an analysis of



the Church as the Priestly People of God with the intention of providing a deeper understanding of the Christological foundation of the priestly ministry. After explaining its apostolicity the report concludes with a view of it as an eschatological service in the world of today.

The report offers a deep insight into the nature of Christian priesthood. In making this work available to us the 'Theological Publications of India' deserves our gratitude. The translation of Fr James Dupuis, S. J. is quite readable and conveys remarkably well the meaning of the French text '*Le Ministère Sacerdotal*'.

Though we really appreciate this book and esteem the spirit behind it, the report seems to neglect certain aspects of the question. The present crisis of the priestly ministry is closely connected with certain structures and the exercise of authority. In the religious as well as secular societies there exists the constant danger of the abuse of authority when it remains unchecked. Even in the apostolic college the thirst for sheer power and prestige was quite evident (cfr Mt 20, 25-128; Mk 10, 42-45) and Our Lord used very strong words to give a right interpretation of authority in the Church. There is no reason to presume that this possibility of abuse is less in our own times! Often it is not the absence of theological principles but of genuine leadership, integrity of life, human understanding and Christian solidarity, which causes frustration to the ministers who have left everything and try to follow the gospel. The present organizational and administrative structures of the Church remain insufficient to check the abuse of authority especially at higher levels. The strange situation in the very sources of ecclesiastical organization frustrates many who sincerely and earnestly desire an evangelical revival and renewal. Here it is not the lack of theological principles but the lack of evangelical spirit that renders the ministry extremely difficult. This is particularly crucial where religious authority is not limited to the spiritual sphere but also has its strong influence in society at large.

The Vatican Council has opened the door to an evangelical revival in the Church. But post-Conciliar developments are not always in harmony with the aims of the Council. In the

highly organized ecclesiastical society the renewal and revival cannot be effective if it is not generously supported and sustained by the higher authorities of the Church. Today we need persons like the great reformer Pope Paul III (1534-49). He appointed the famous commission of Nine which presented the well-known report on reform in 1537. It contained a programme which was later adopted by the Council of Trent. This commission which consisted of genuine reformers of great integrity had no hesitation in pointing out the abuses that existed in the organizational centres of the Church and in suggesting concrete ways to eradicate them. We need eminent reformers like Cardinal Contarini and Caraffa who were the pioneers of the Tridentine reform after the Protestant revolt.

The crisis in the priestly ministry will continue as long as the policy of reform of abuses and exploitation within the Church remains too soft, and too eloquent in preaching principles! The report of the Theological Commission on the priestly ministry is bound to meet with the same fate if it ends in the mere preaching of principles. Everybody knows that Vatican II was convoked for renewal of the Church. It may have the same fate as the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-17) which not only failed in its mission of reform and renewal but also aggravated the situation and precipitated the Protestant revolt.

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